

# THE HISTADRUT

A Labor Commonwealth  
in the Making

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By

ABRAHAM REVUSKY

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*"The Histadrut is in conception, essence, and structure, the workers' instrument for the founding of a state, for the building of a land, for the liberation of a people."*

DAVID BEN GURION

Published by the  
LEAGUE FOR LABOR PALESTINE

1937

הסתדרות הכללית של העובדים בארץ-ישראל

# HISTADRUTH MAP IN ERETZ ISRAEL

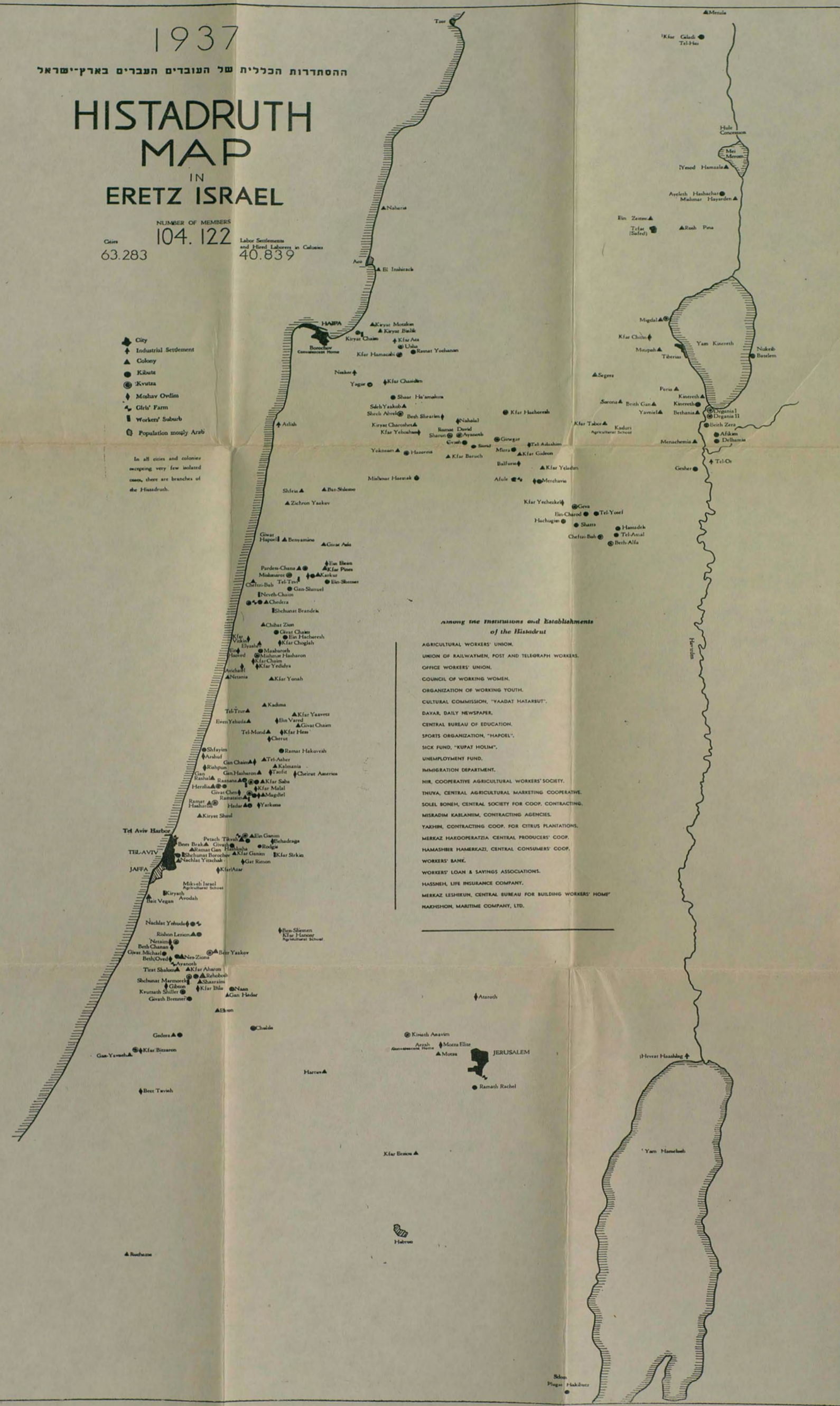
Cities 63.283  
NUMBER OF MEMBERS 104.122  
Labor Settlements and Hired Laborers in Colonies 40.839

- ▲ City
- ▲ Industrial Settlement
- ▲ Colony
- Kibutz
- Kvutza
- Moshav Ordim
- ▲ Girls' Farm
- Workers' Suburb
- Population mostly Arab

In all cities and colonies excepting very few isolated ones, there are branches of the Histadruth.

### Among the Institutions and Establishments of the Histadruth

- AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' UNION.
- UNION OF RAILWAYMEN, POST AND TELEGRAPH WORKERS.
- OFFICE WORKERS' UNION.
- COUNCIL OF WORKING WOMEN.
- ORGANIZATION OF WORKING YOUTH.
- CULTURAL COMMISSION, "YAADAT HATARBUT".
- DAYAR, DAILY NEWSPAPER.
- CENTRAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION.
- SPORTS ORGANIZATION, "HAFOL".
- SICK FUND, "KUPAT HOLIM".
- UNEMPLOYMENT FUND.
- IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT.
- NIR, COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' SOCIETY.
- THUVA, CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING COOPERATIVE.
- SOLEL BONEH, CENTRAL SOCIETY FOR COOP. CONTRACTING.
- MISRADIM KALANIM, CONTRACTING AGENCIES.
- YAKHIM, CONTRACTING COOP. FOR CITRUS PLANTATIONS.
- MERKAZ HAKOOPERATZIA, CENTRAL PRODUCERS' COOP.
- HAMASHIER HAMERKAZI, CENTRAL CONSUMERS' COOP.
- WORKERS' BANK.
- WORKERS' LOAN & SAVINGS ASSOCIATIONS.
- HASSNEH, LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY.
- MERKAZ LESHIKUN, CENTRAL BUREAU FOR BUILDING WORKERS' HOMES.
- MAKESHON, MARITIME COMPANY, LTD.



# THE HISTADRUT

(General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine)

*A Labor Commonwealth in the Making*

By

ABRAHAM REVUSKY

(Author of *Jews in Palestine*)

1938

LEAGUE FOR LABOR PALESTINE

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## FOREWORD

The necessity of a publication that shall give a clear and concise description of the ideals, functions, and colonization methods of the Histadrut has been greatly felt ever since, by the friends of Labor Palestine in this country. I hope that this little book will satisfy this need and will stimulate the reader to further study of the subject.

The interest that the Histadrut has called forth outside of Palestine is based on two divergent motives. As the outstanding agency of Jewish reconstruction work in Palestine, the Histadrut naturally attracts wide attention on the part of people who are concerned with the successful establishment of the Jewish national home, irrespective of their social leanings. On the other hand, as one of the most important social laboratories in contemporary history, the Histadrut has gained the deepest admiration of everyone who is interested in true economic democracy and in genuine social justice—regardless of one's attitude toward the Jewish national aspirations in Palestine.

These two motives are merged in a supreme ideal of the national regeneration of an old people in their ancient land, on the foundations of the most modern and most progressive social principles. This ideal, broadly known as Labor Zionism, is being realized in the unique edifice—the Histadrut—which rises gradually in the small country lying at the crossroads of three continents. The story of the Histadrut as related in the following pages presents only in bare outline the facts about the heroic life and work of the pioneers who are serving as the vanguard of the national and social liberation of an entire people.

The author began to work on this book before the outbreak of the recent riots in Palestine. However, these riots, and the subsequent partition plan, had no bearing on the basic character of the Histadrut. Despite the Arab attacks and the ensuing economic recession, the Histadrut suc-

ceeded in maintaining all its previous positions, and even added a few important institutions to its broad net of activities. The calm firmness shown by the Jewish workers of Palestine in the midst of bloody attacks and incessant provocations, is the most glorious indication of their fortitude and of their determination to continue building their great historical enterprise.

The amazing many-sidedness of the functions of the Histadrut, made the task of condensing the accumulated material into a short and readable book extremely difficult. In my attempt to be just and objective in the allotment of adequate space to the various activities and institutions of the Histadrut, I may have unwittingly treated some of them too niggardly. It is also possible, that, trying to avoid anything that savours of propaganda, I have underestimated their role and importance. However, I consider this first edition as an initial effort that will be improved upon and brought up to date in later editions. The readers—especially in Palestine—are therefore urged to come forward with suggestions and criticism, and the author will be glad to take them earnestly into consideration in his future work on the subject.

For the accomplishment of this work, I am ingratiated, in the first place, to the Central Office of the Histadrut in Tel Aviv, which supplied some of the material that served as a basis for this study. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the intelligent cooperation I received from Dr. Alexander S. Kohanski, National Secretary of the League for Labor Palestine. I further wish to express my sincere thanks to Rebecca Jarvis, Bertha G. Balsam, Marie Syrkin Reznikoff, and Joseph Schlossberg for their valuable suggestions in revising the style of this book, and to Joseph Gurion of Palestine, for his helpful comments on its content.

ABRAHAM REVUSKY

New York, January 1938.

## THE GENERAL AIMS OF THE HISTADRUT

The Histadrut, the General Labor Federation created by the Jewish workers of Palestine in November, 1920, is one of the most unusual labor organizations in the world. Any attempt to gauge this remarkable organization by the criteria generally accepted in other countries would be futile. A foreign observer accustomed to usual standards, would be greatly puzzled at his first acquaintance with the Histadrut. The Histadrut cannot be classified as a trade union federation, similar to the American Federation of Labor. Though composed largely of trade unions, the Histadrut is nevertheless far from being a typical union federation, limited to the improvement of the working conditions of its members. Neither can it be classified as a political organization; though it fulfills important political tasks, it is strikingly different in essence and in structure from political parties in other countries. It is likewise wrong to consider it a cooperative center; though actively supported by the Histadrut, the cooperatives are only one part of its manifold activities. Including, as it does, trade unions, cooperatives, and political activities, it has yet additional and broader functions. It is the expression of the destiny of a nation. It aims to restore a deserted country to a scattered people, to regenerate a rootless youth by a life of work, and to recast it, in the furnace of the homeland, into a powerful and enlightened working class.

Thus, the Histadrut is far from resembling the labor organizations in other countries which are motivated primarily by self-protection and the desire for economic advancement. It is one of those exceptional labor organizations which are more interested in the future than in the present.

“Our task is not only to organize the worker, but to create him, to train him, and bring him into the land. We strive not only to improve labor conditions, but to seek and multiply opportunities for labor and possibilities for immigration. Our aim is not only to improve the present economic order, but to build an entirely new economy in agriculture and industry. We must not only make the worker an active factor in the cultural and spiritual life of the nation, but create a new literature and art. We must not only obtain and defend his political rights, but establish a basis for a free commonwealth and mold the society which shall evolve therein. The Histadrut is in conception, essence, and structure, the workers’ instrument for the founding of a state, for the building of a land, for the liberation of a people.”

This excerpt from a speech by David Ben Gurion, the outstanding leader of the Histadrut, clearly defines its specific aims, which transcend the customary tasks of trade unions and political parties.

## COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

The broader aims of the Histadrut are reflected in its unusual constitution which cannot be compared to that of any working-class organization in other countries. The Histadrut is constructed not merely as a federation of smaller organizations as is, for instance, the American Federation of Labor. In the latter organization, the worker is directly a member of his particular union and only indirectly is he affiliated through that union with the Federation. In the Histadrut, the worker is directly a member of the organization as a whole, his trade union being but a subordinate part of the general body. The autonomy of the single union is partly sacrificed in order to insure the greater efficiency of the Histadrut as a whole.



Elections to the conventions of the Histadrut are conducted in a manner resembling elections to a Parliament. Every member of the organization, regardless of his trade union affiliation, casts his vote in a common ballot box for the candidates he chooses from several lists of nominees presented to the workers throughout the country. These lists are, as a rule, offered by the political parties represented in the Histadrut, and they reflect ideological differences rather than occupational divisions.

Elections to the local "Labor Council," which is the most powerful agency of the labor movement of a given locality, are conducted in the same manner. These "Councils" are not merely an agglomeration of delegates from respective trade unions as is the case with innocuous "Trades Councils" and similar bodies in other countries; the delegates to the "council" of a Palestinian city are elected directly by the workers on the basis of democratic and proportional representation, and the body thus elected is in full charge of the local situation. No trade union, for instance, is allowed to declare an important strike, or to end one, without the Council's approval.

Another unusual aspect of the organizational structure of the Histadrut is the fact that it accords equal voting rights to the wives of its members, even when they do not ply a trade of their own.

All these deviations from the usual practice of other labor organizations are a logical consequence of the unique functions of the Histadrut and of the paramount importance attached thereto by the workers of Palestine. The Jewish worker of Palestine sees in his Histadrut the beginning of a future labor commonwealth with which the whole Jewish community of Palestine will some day be identified. In the eyes of the worker, his Histadrut is the future labor commonwealth of Palestine in the preliminary stage of its creation.

The doors of the Histadrut are open to every Jewish man or woman of 17 years of age and over who lives by work and does not exploit others. The constitution of the Histadrut consistently stresses the principle of self-work and non-exploitation as the primary condition of membership. Strict observance of this tenet is expected of all members, without exception—in cities as well as in villages, in factories as well as in agricultural settlements.

### GLORIFICATION OF LABOR

In the eyes of the Histadrut, labor is not an unfortunate necessity, but a vital commandment which raises man from a decadent parasitic existence to honor and courage, to a high mastery of life. Work is glorified as opening the prospect of a rebirth for a rootless and landless nation. The elevation of labor to the highest principle of life is dictated by the unique Palestinian situation, by the extraordinary functions which the Histadruth must fulfill, and by its conviction that all efforts to achieve a genuine Jewish renaissance will be futile unless the new Jewish generation in Palestine is definitely committed to a life of productive work.

To understand correctly the background of the idealistic attitude of the Histadrut toward manual labor, we must bear in mind that most of its members originally came from petty bourgeois families where in previous generations heavy physical work had been shunned as a degradation. The unusual task of transforming the sons and daughters of small shopkeepers and "Luftmenschen" — over-abundant among the Jewish masses in Galuth—into workers who are willing to do any kind of arduous physical labor that might be required for the upbuilding of Palestine, resulted in a glorification of labor almost unparalleled in other labor organizations of the world. The Jewish pioneers in Palestine have actually created "a religion of labor." It is not a religion in the usual sense of the

word. It has neither priests nor ceremonies, and involves no mystic worship of an unknown Supreme Being. It is a deep, quasi-religious conviction, firmly imbedded in the hearts of its adherents. The adoration of labor by the pioneers of Palestine received a theoretical foundation in the teachings of A. D. Gordon, the sage of "Dagania,"



who exercised a tremendous influence on the ideology of Palestine's labor movement. Following are a few excerpts from his writings:

"A people which has been completely cut off from nature and, for thousands of years confined within the walls of the ghetto, a people that has become accustomed to every mode of life save the natural one—the life of self-conscious and self-supporting labor—such a people will never again become a living, natural, laboring people unless it strains every fibre of its will power to attain this goal. We strive to labor—not compulsory labor, but labor to which every human being is bound by an organic, natural tie, and by which a people is tied to its soil and to the civilization which grows out of its soil and its work. Labor is not merely the factor which establishes man's contact with the land and his claim to the land; it is also the principle force in the building of a national civilization.

"We have to make labor the center of all our endeavor, the foundation on which our whole undertaking is based. Only when we raise labor as such to the height of an ideal—or, to put it more correctly, when we reveal the ideal contained in labor, shall we be healed of the disease with which we have been stricken, and be able to bridge the gulf which divides us from nature. Labor is a great human ideal of the future, and a great ideal is like the healing sun. We need fanatics of labor, in the most exalted sense of the word."\*

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\*A. D. Gordon, born in Russia in 1856, went to Palestine in 1904, at the beginning of the Second Aliyah, and died there in 1922. At the age of 48, he left a comfortable position in Russia and went to Palestine to contribute by manual labor to the upbuilding of the land. His great moral influence soon elevated him to the position of teacher and guide to many of his younger co-workers. He was one of the founders of the "Hapoel Hatzair" (Young Worker) and the most important theoretician of that party. At present, the substance of his teachings, and especially his "adoration of labor" are generally accepted by all sections of Palestine's labor movement.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE HISTADRUT

Because of its extraordinary functions, the Histadrut has grown phenomenally, outstripping in proportion even the rapid growth of the Jewish population of Palestine. Founded with 4,433 members in November, 1920, it has at present a membership of 104,122. Add to this 35,413 wives of the workers, and 59,841 children, and the total is 199,376, or 48% of the Jewish population in Palestine.\* There is hardly a labor organization in the world that carries, relatively speaking, so much weight in the surrounding community.

In addition to its dues-paying members, the Histadrut has a great following among the general Jewish population of Palestine. Its political slogans are willingly followed by large sections of the Jewish farmers, small traders, artisans, and professional men, even by those who, because of their occupation or personal inertia, do not belong to the Histadrut as full-fledged members. Because of this large following, the Histadrut is able not only to direct the economic and political activities of the workers in Palestine, but also to represent to a very large extent, the general interests of the Yishuv as a whole.

The activities and achievements of the Histadrut have attracted for the latter an ever-increasing following in Galuth, where large Jewish masses, looking upon Palestine as their future National Home, follow the events there with very great concern. The Histadrut has therefore been able, in conjunction with its affiliated labor parties in other countries, to secure an ever growing representation in the World Zionist Congress, the agency which is mainly instrumental in the upbuilding of a Jewish Palestine. The Labor Wing, with the help of Liberal bourgeois Zionists, was in actual control of the last two Zionist Congresses,

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\*These figures were taken from the Histadrut Census of 1937. (See *Pinkas of the Histadrut*, Tel Aviv, November, 1937, p. 55.)

in Lucerne (1935) and in Zurich (1937). The executive of the Jewish Agency, composed of Zionist representatives elected at the Congress, together with a smaller number of "non-Zionists" who are pledged to participate in the up-building of Palestine, is under the influence of its capable and purposeful labor members. Thus, the Histadrut, having begun with limited functions as a body representing only Palestine's workers has now grown to be the most influential factor in the life of world Jewry.

### BEFORE THE HISTADRUT WAS FOUNDED

The history of the Jewish labor movement in Palestine does not begin with the Histadrut (organized in 1920). Years before it was founded, the Jewish workers had already distinguished themselves as pioneers of economic, social, and political progress in Palestine. The history of Jewish labor in Palestine actually dates from the very beginning of modern Jewish colonization.

The period of the *Bilu* movement, which started 56 years ago (1881) marks the first advent of the Jewish worker into modern Palestine. Most of the *Bilu* pioneers became, upon their arrival, hired workers in the young Jewish colonies. Later, when they were given an opportunity to settle on their own land, other youthful enthusiasts took their place in the field of hired labor.

A few years later, the Jewish workers of Palestine made the first attempt to organize themselves. In 1887 a "Workers' Union" was already in existence in the colony of Rishon Lezion. It was not long before more labor organizations were founded in other parts of the country. In general, however, the number of workers in Palestine was still insignificant, their views of special problems were rather primitive, and their societies were, therefore, of slight importance.

## THE SECOND "ALIJAH" AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

A very strong impetus toward the development of a more modern labor movement was provided by the second "Aliyah" which was started in 1904. It brought to Palestine large numbers of class-conscious workers who had a strong craving for social justice besides their Zionist convictions. Manual labor, occupation in the primary branches of production, devotion to agriculture, mutual aid, self defense—these were the guiding principles set forth by the second "Aliyah" for the Jewish workers of Palestine. These principles were later adopted by the Histadrut, and have remained its basic creed to the present.

One of the most important aims of the second "Aliyah" was the Conquest of Labor (Kibush Haavoda). This frequently misinterpreted slogan has a three-fold meaning. First, it implies the acquisition of a place of work for the individual Jewish "oleh" (labor immigrant) who is being driven to Palestine by anti-Semitic persecution and economic distress. Its second meaning is "self-conquest," the moral preparation of the "oleh" for a life of labor; this implies the overcoming of habits and prejudices inherited from generations of city dwellers and tradesmen. The third meaning, which is a consequence of the first two achievements, is the conquest of an opportunity for the Jewish people to live and work in Palestine.

The second "Aliyah" began after the pogroms of Kishinev and Homel (1903) which were so notorious for their cruelty. It received added impetus after the collapse of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Jewish youth whose hope for the future was frustrated, were filled with despair and inner revolt. Shaken to their depths, some of them turned to Eretz Israel as their last hope. To break away from the Galuth, to strike roots in the old-new land, to work on it, to be spiritually transformed and renewed, became

their ideal. It was no accident that the second "Aliyah" was started by members of the "Poale Zion" groups who had risked their lives in the Jewish self-defense during the Homel pogrom. The idea of redemption through labor was a natural result of this state of mind.

### YEARS OF TRIAL

The men of the second "Aliyah" came to Palestine inspired by great faith and determination, but what awaited them there was far from encouraging. The land was desolate and bare. Swamps and dread malaria ruled everywhere. And the solitude was unbearable: no books, no newspapers, no clubs, no cultural environment. A still greater disappointment was the attitude taken by the older settlers toward the newcomers. These erstwhile pioneers, settled in the colonies founded with the support of the late Baron Rothschild, had degenerated into exploiters. Instead of tilling the soil with their own hands, they employed cheap Arab labor. Even the former "Bilu" pioneers had forgotten their own gospel. Strangers worked their fields and vineyards. But the new Jewish immigrants who were on the verge of starvation, could find no employment in the plantations of the former pioneers.

Doubly bitter was the lot of the woman worker who had come to this blazing, deserted land with the second "Aliyah." In addition to the pangs of adjustment and the difficulties of adaptation to a life of labor under hard and primitive conditions, she was also compelled to carry the burden of the home and the kitchen. Her inexperience and the poverty which prevailed in the country made her lot all the harder and more trying. Yet she took her part in the work and danger with incomparable courage and unwavering loyalty.\*

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\*An intimate account of the strain and stress of the woman of those days is given in the anthology "The Ploughwoman," originally written in Hebrew and later translated into English by Maurice Samuel.



In spite of all these hardships and privations, the pioneers, true to their great ideal, clung to their self-imposed task of securing for the Jewish worker the place due him in his future national home. Although many of them had come from comparatively wealthy families and had been accustomed to a life of leisure, they were nevertheless ready to submit to the lowest possible standard of living, in order to lay a foundation for a normal and productive Jewish commonwealth of the future. With this ideal before them, they accepted the hardest work under the most trying conditions. Even the older colonists, morally corrupted by their exploitation of cheap Arab labor, could not help but admire the idealism and the spirit of self-sacrifice evinced by these new pioneers.

Hard work, low pay, miserable food, unsanitary living conditions—all failed to subdue the creative spirit of these strong-minded pioneers. Alert to the problems of the new land, they searched untiringly for solutions. Shortly after the beginning of the second "Aliyah," two labor parties were organized which greatly influenced the subsequent crystallization of Palestine's Labor ideology. Though differing essentially in their social philosophy, these parties—Poale Zion and Hapoel Hatzair—were equally devoted to the ideal of Zionism. Both parties considered it their duty to be of the greatest possible assistance in the building of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

### POALE ZION AND HAPOEL HATZAIR

The Poale Zion Party of Palestine was a branch of the world wide movement of that name which, although Socialistic in its fundamental conceptions, recognized Palestine as the radical solution of the Jewish problem. The Hapoel Hatzair, founded in 1906, laid still greater stress on Zionism, and rejected certain socialistic principles which it considered contradictory to its main aim. For example, the Hapoel Hatzair did not encourage strikes and refused

to participate in the First of May celebrations and in the Socialist International. Years passed before these fundamental differences were whittled down in the process of mutual re-adjustment until the final amalgamation of the two parties was made possible.

Both parties, the Poale Zion and the Hapoel Hatzair, were in the beginning the most important protagonists of collective colonization and gradual adjustment to the new environment. The most significant ideas of modern Palestine were conceived and crystallized during those trying years of adaptation.

Another important organization founded at that time was the Hashomer (The Watchman). A group of fearless pioneers undertook the task of protecting the Jewish colonies against brigands and thieves. Because of the proximity of the desert, with its roaming Bedouin tribes, and the prevalence of banditry and pillaging in the sparsely inhabited regions surrounding the new Jewish colonies, the guarding of crops and livestock against thieves and robbers, and even the prevention and repulsion of mass attacks on the colonies, were vital problems of the new Yishuv. Before the advent of Hashomer, the colonies had to rely for this service on Arab watchmen, some of whom were themselves bandits. Besides, dependence on Arab watchmen afforded little safety to the establishment of a Jewish National home.

The story of the "Hashomer," of those young men who were traditionally opposed to armed resistance and to anything that savored even remotely of militarism, but who were nevertheless ready to bear arms in defense of their future national home, is one of the most heroic in the recent history of Palestine. Many are the spots in Palestine which have been drenched with the blood of Jewish watchmen, and many are the deeds of dauntless

courage of these young men whose memory is engraved forever in the annals of Palestine's labor movement.\*

The success of the "Hashomer" in gradually taking over the watch in most of the Jewish colonies considerably strengthened the position of the Jewish workers in all parts of the country. Especially great was its influence in Galilee, which became the laboratory for all kinds of new experiments. In those days, the first national farm was founded by the National Fund in Kinereth, on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias. There, also, the first girls' farm school was started.

### BIRTH OF THE KVUTZA

During that period, a group of enthusiastic workers established the first Palestinian commune in Sedjera, a "PICA"\*\*\* colony in Lower Galilee. A few workers pooled the wages that they had earned at work in the fields and orchards of the older colonists, and established a commune of their own with common living quarters and a common kitchen. This commune, which proved to be a great success, convinced its members of their ability to lead a new socialized life on a collective basis. On the strength of this successful experiment, they later leased from the National Fund a tract of land in the Valley of the Jordan, near the Sea of Tiberias, where they founded the first agricultural commune of Palestine, Dagania. In this manner was laid the foundation for the most important achievement of the Jewish workers in Eretz Israel — the Kvutza.

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\*A description of "Hashomer's" activities is given in an anthology "Yizkor" (In Memoriam), issued by the Poale Zion, 1916. Originally written in Yiddish, "Yizkor" was later translated into several other languages.

\*\*\*"PICA" means "Palestine Ica." It is an agency founded by Baron Rothschild, the famous patron of Jewish colonization work in Palestine, jointly with the "ICA" (Jewish Colonization Association) in order to continue his life work.

The years of the second Aliyah also witnessed the beginning of a trade union organization in the modern sense of the word. A union of agricultural workers was started in Galilee, labor clubs were organized in Jaffa, and a Press Workers' Union was founded in Jerusalem. Other trade unions followed in quick succession. The most important of all was the Agricultural Workers' Union, which later affiliated with the Histadrut and which still exists as a subsidiary of the latter. At its inception, this union numbered 200 members. At present its membership is about 31,081, more than half of whom are agricultural workers, that is, wage-earners on private farms. The rest are settlers in the various types of Jewish workers' villages in Palestine.

The years 1910-1914, preceding the World War, were years of aliyah (immigration) and growth, of daring dreams and courageous deeds. Just before the War, in the first seven months of 1914, approximately 8,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine. All signs seemed to indicate that the country, which heretofore had been able to accept only a limited number of hardy pioneers, had finally reached the stage of mass immigration. At this point the War broke out—four trying, difficult and cruel years for the workers of Palestine. The small country, transformed into an actual war arena, was subjected to untold hardships. But the workers of Palestine withstood the test. In the face of hunger, epidemics, complete isolation from the Diaspora, and the tyranny of the military authorities, the small workers' community remained steadfast, and even shouldered the responsibility of keeping the impoverished and helpless Yishuv from disintegrating. They found new strength in the political changes brought to Palestine by the War. The Turkish rule, basically inimical to Jewish aspirations, was deposed; the Balfour declaration, issued by the new rulers of the country, promised to establish a Jewish Home in Palestine. These magic words released a new wave of hope and enthusiasm. Never before

had the country been so inspired with faith in the future of Zionism as it was at that particular time.

### AFTER THE WORLD WAR, THE THIRD ALIYAH

At the end of the War, the ranks of the Jewish workers in Palestine were greatly increased by the arrival of the Jewish Legion, which consisted mainly of Jewish workers from the United States who considered it their duty to help free Palestine from its Turkish oppressors. In Palestine itself, many workers and their leaders gathered under the banner of the Legion.

Unfortunately, most of the Legionnaires were not given an opportunity to realize their dream of remaining in Palestine and helping to build the Jewish home—not with the gun but with the plough. Shortly after the War, however, there began a great influx of other young workers, imbued with Zionist ideals. They came mostly from Eastern Europe, where the ravages of the World War, the crumbling of old empires, and the breaking up of established economic entities, had uprooted great masses of the Jewish people and forced them to seek a new haven of refuge, a new chance in life. These conditions, aggravated by the chaos of Russia's Civil War and the ensuing pogroms, gave a tremendous impetus to a new wave of emigration, of which a very substantial part was driven to seek shelter in Palestine. Thus began the *Third Aliyah*. At that time the "Hechalutz" (The Pioneer) was started in Russia. The name of Joseph Trumpeldor, later killed in the defense of Tel Chai (April, 1920), is inseparably linked with the inception and rapid growth of this important organization. Inspired by this exceptional leader, one group of halutzim after another made their way into Palestine, at the risk of their lives, and with the courage that came from desperation. The roads from Russia were still blockaded, and even the most influential Zionist leaders were then opposed to this "premature" aliyah. Hundreds of halutzim scattered throughout the various lands were

left to their own fate. They had to reach the country of their dreams through their own efforts. Many of them perished on the way, and their remains are scattered in the depths of the Black Sea, in the waters of the Dynester, on the Caucasian mountains, and on the plains of Persia. Many others, however, reached their land of promise.

The small workers' community of Palestine received the "Hechalutz" groups who had broken through all these barriers, with great enthusiasm and hailed them as a welcome addition to the Jewish working class of Palestine. The men of the second Aliyah introduced the newcomers to the life and labor of the land. They took it upon themselves to find employment for them. An important achievement of the Jewish labor organizations at that time, was the fact that they obtained a share in the road-building work of the government. That was the first time that the workers' community of Palestine had received a contract for a large public undertaking, that also created new avenues of employment for the newly arrived halutzim.

For over two years, more than 3,000 halutzim were employed at quarrying, stone cutting and road-building. The work was carried out in the face of endless difficulties and hardships. It was not easy to become adjusted to this kind of work,—to live in tents, in large camps, to perform, under the blazing sun, work requiring great physical endurance, and to do it all without adequate working experience and vocational training. Yet, the halutzim, spurred on by pioneering fervor and by their great ideal, persisted in their task and thus conquered a new and important branch of labor for the Jewish workers of Palestine.

A short time after the beginning of the Third Aliyah, the British military administration of Palestine was replaced by a civil government headed by a High Commissioner.\*

\*The first High Commissioner of Palestine was Sir Herbert Samuel (1920-1925), a Jew prominent in the Liberal ranks of England. In spite of his being a Jew, his administration of Palestine did not prove to be of much help to the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home.

With the advent of a civil government, labor immigration to Palestine changed its previous chaotic character and assumed a better organized aspect. The system of "certificates" was adopted. Though limiting the total number of Jewish immigrants admitted to Palestine, this system nevertheless allowed a degree of planning in the organization of the Aliyah. The certificates granted twice a year to the Jewish Agency, in accordance with the absorptive capacity of Palestine, stimulated the establishment of more Hakshara Farms (Preparatory Farms) in Galuth and the preparation of halutzim in different countries for a life of productive labor in Palestine.

### NEW IDEAS, GDUD AVODAH

The first post-war wave of halutzim brought with it many new ideas and organizations that made an indelible impression on Palestine's labor community. The most important of them was the "Gdud Avodah" (Labor Legion), sponsored by the late Joseph Trumpeldor and brought to realization by his followers after his untimely death.

Although the name has a military taint (it reminds us of the labor battalions of the World War and of similar creations in present-day Germany), it has, really, nothing in common with these offsprings of militarism and fascism. In Palestine, the term "Gdud Avodah" merely designated a labor camp on waste land, in which there lived hundreds of workers who had voluntarily imposed upon themselves a certain amount of discipline which was necessary for the accomplishment of their common task. Later, the idea of "Gdud Avodah" was broadened to combine several labor camps with a few agricultural settlements. The founders of "Gdud Avodah" had hoped to solve in this manner the problem of a labor reserve made necessary by seasonal fluctuations which seemed to be unavoidable in agriculture. The halutzim of Palestine could not resign themselves to the idea of a permanent reserve of unemployed accepted

by capitalism as a necessary evil. Rejecting this heartless capitalistic solution of the problem, and trying to solve it on the basis of social justice, they conceived the idea of pooling the human resources of several units engaged in various economic pursuits. They tried to establish a close unity between several labor groups engaged in urban trades and public works on the one hand, and a few collective farms on the other. Such a unity was intended to insure for the latter a certain number of additional workers at the peak of their seasonal requirements without employing hired labor from the outside, which would otherwise imply the necessity of a permanent reserve of unemployment.

Another economic purpose of the "Gdud Avodah" was the creation of a greater degree of security by pooling the resources and earnings of a greater number of workers. When one of the labor camps, belonging to the "Gdud," finished a task at some public construction project and faced temporary unemployment, because of the lack of work in the same field, it was able to rely on the common treasury of the "Gdud" which permitted no inequality among the closely-knitted members. It thus became possible to engage these temporarily unemployed members in amelioration work on the land of a Kvutza belonging to the "Gdud." There was always some kind of reserve work, drainage, well-digging, terracing, forest planting — that could be held in abeyance until the "Gdud" should have at its disposal a certain number of additional laborers who could not, at that particular time, be employed in other, more profitable work.

Although the "Gdud Avodah" is now a thing of the past, its fundamental idea—a closely knit unity among different economic units who are engaged in rural and urban pursuits,—has not been discarded. Its economic principles have been fully adopted by the larger "Kibutzim" of the present time. The Kibutz Hameuchad of the "Mapai" (Labor Party of Palestine) and especially the



Kibutz Haartzi of the "Hashomer Hatzair," are practically an embodiment of the Gdud Avodah in a more modern form.

## THE FOUNDING OF THE HISTADRUT

One year after the beginning of the Third Aliyah, the General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine, now known as the "Histadrut" was founded. (1920). The Histadrut was conceived by the best minds of Palestine's labor movement, who understood that the manifold responsibilities undertaken by the Jewish workers of Palestine require the complete union of all constructive labor forces in the country. If there could not be complete agreement on ideas and sociological theories, at least, a practical unity, resulting in a working instrument for the realization of their common goal, had to be established.

A few lines quoted from an appeal for unity issued by Trumpeldor a short time before his heroic death will help clarify the circumstances that brought about the foundation of such a unique labor organization :

"Jewry is on the threshold of most important developments. In the coming months or years the fate of the Jewish people, the alternative between life and death, will be settled in Palestine. Driven by pogroms and massacres, the Jews of Russia have come to the gates of the land, and now beseech permission to enter it. An extraordinary united effort of all workers is necessary. Every minute is precious. Every second we tarry will be deemed a sin. Let us be strong enough, therefore, to break away from the vicious cycle of partisanship. Let us approach one another with hearts opened in comradeship for the sake of our common work."

The direct connection shown in this appeal between the union of Palestinian workers and the salvation of a nation knocking at the gates of the land, is highly characteristic of

the broad Zionists tasks with which the united movement was endowed from the very beginning, tasks which the Histadrut actually fulfills to this day.

After some delay, caused by natural conservatism and mutual mistrust of the political factions into which Palestine's labor movement was then divided, the appeal for unity finally prevailed, and in November, 1920, the first convention of the Histadrut Ovdim (Organization of Workers) was opened in Haifa. There the fundamental principles of this all-embracing organization were adopted. It was decided that the Histadrut should not intrude into the strictly political field, this domain to be reserved to the political parties proper. Let it concentrate its energies on the fields of economic betterment, colonization, and culture where no sharp divergences exist among the political groups composing the Histadrut.

The general character of the Histadrut was determined by its founders at this first convention in the following way:

“In the first instance the Histadrut considers it its duty to create a new type of Jewish worker, and to see to it that while colonization is developing, the Jewish worker who came into being as a result of this very colonizing process, shall be assured the place he deserves. The Histadrut includes all toilers who live by their own labor without exploiting others; it regulates all matters concerning the working class in the fields of trade union activities, colonization and education, with the aim of building a Jewish Workers' Community in Palestine.”

### FUNCTION OF THE HISTADRUT

Immediately after its foundation, the Histadrut became the most important instrument, not only for improving the living conditions of Palestine's workers, but, to a far greater

extent, for bringing new labor immigrants and absorbing them into the growing economy of Palestine. It became, in other words, the most effective factor in the establishment of the Jewish National Home.

With this aim in view the Histadrut was instrumental in establishing collective farms, supervising their progress, and providing them with necessary funds. It has organized the sale of agricultural products and the cooperative purchase of consumers goods. In addition to establishing cooperatives in transportation and several lines of urban production, it operates contracting agencies in various fields of construction work. It also takes the initiative in introducing Jewish workers to trades alien to them in other countries—for instance, maritime transportation, fishing, extraction of minerals—by organizing special groups and providing them with instructors and training facilities. Another of its functions has been the organization of home building groups and the coordination of their activities through a central office for housing that is assuming an ever-increasing share in the upbuilding of Palestine's cities. Furthermore, the Histadrut exercises a controlling influence in the Workers' Bank, established with the help of the Zionist Organization, and it was likewise instrumental in creating a net of workers' loan associations. Under its supervision a country-wide health organization,—“Kupat Holim”—with its own clinics, hospitals, and sanitarium, was brought into being. Workers' schools and diversified cultural activities, which include lectures, theatres, music, etc., hold an important place among its manifold activities. In addition it sponsors workers' sports groups and exercises the actual control over Jewish self-defense in the event of hostile Arab outbreaks.

### POLITICAL INFLUENCE

As time went on, the Histadrut gradually expanded its political activities beyond the limits prescribed by its found-

ing convention; in many cases it now actually supersedes the political organizations of Palestine's labor. This is especially true of matters pertaining to Zionism and the future of the Yishuv.

The great ideological influence of the Histadrut on Jewish workers extends far beyond the boundaries of Palestine. Because of this influence, and because of its active supervision of labor immigration into Palestine—involving, as it does, full control of the Halutzim organizations and Hakhshara groups in Galuth—the Histadrut actually has the decisive voice in most Zionist labor organizations outside of Palestine. It exercises, moreover, a widespread influence on the large part of the Jewish middle class—especially the poorer section—that sees in Palestine the most promising solution of its woes.

To write the history of the Histadrut since its foundation would mean writing the whole history of Jewish Palestine for the last seventeen years, an undertaking which would far exceed the scope of this small book.\* It is sufficient to say that the Histadrut has grown in membership and power along with the growth of the new Palestine. At the present moment, with a membership of 105,000 out of a population of 425,000, it is the most important influence in shaping the destiny of the Jewish National Home.

### ZIONIST WORK

The specific functions of the Histadrut which stamp it as a Zionist agency as well as a labor body are primarily:

1. Selecting and training labor immigrants and helping them to reach the shores of Palestine (Aliyah).
2. Creating and increasing opportunities for Jewish labor in Palestine (Avodah).

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\*The most concise history of the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine after the War will be found in the book by A. Revusky, *Jews in Palestine*, Chap. III, 'Palestine Since the War.'

3. Organizing labor groups for settlement on the land and actually helping in their colonization (Hityashvut).

Even before the Histadrut was founded, the Jewish workers in Palestine were firmly convinced that continued immigration is of paramount importance for the whole future of the country. Consequently, during all the years of its existence the Histadrut has considered the encouragement, regulation, and management of the Aliyah to be its primary task. At all times and under all conditions, in years of expansion and in years of stagnation, it has thrown the best of its energy into work for the Aliyah. It is not by accident that almost half of all the immigrants and no less than 80% of the labor Aliyah employ the services of the Immigration offices (Merkaz Aliyah) of the Histadrut in the ports of entry into Palestine.

The labor movement of Palestine has exalted the conception of "Aliyah" and filled it with deep moral content. "Aliyah" is not merely immigration. This word, which may be literally translated as "ascension," embodies also the idea of redeeming a people and freeing its individual members from the decadence and humiliation of the Diaspora.

Berl Katznelson, the foremost ideologist of the Histadrut, and editor of its daily paper, "Davar," describes the significance of the "Aliyah" for Palestine's labor movement in the following manner.:

"There are many meanings to the word 'Aliyah.' 'Aliyah' means climbing the rungs of a ladder, and it also means going to Palestine. Going to any other land we call 'Immigration,' but returning to Zion, and to Zion alone, is 'Aliyah.' 'Aliyah' is a rise from the depths of the Galuth to the homeland, to the land of liberty. We use Aliyah in both the material and the spiritual sense. There is an Aliyah of will and of hope. There is an Aliyah of the class and of the nation, and there is also an Aliyah of the individual. We have always looked

upon ourselves as Halutzim, the pioneers of the people. Behind us, thousands await redemption. They shall come, and, together with us, shall build this land."

## ORGANIZING LABOR IMMIGRATION

The worker immigrants to Palestine are not picked at random from the overcrowded ghettos of the Diaspora, but are carefully selected from a number of aspirants, who must undergo a rigorous training ("Hakshara") in order to enable them to fulfill the hard task awaiting them in the country predestined to become their National Home. The training of the Halutzim consists of spiritual re-adjustment, as well as of acquiring the habit of doing manual work, and a rudimentary knowledge of agriculture and trades. The spiritual training consists of learning Hebrew, the common language of the Jews who come to Palestine from different countries and diverse cultural surroundings, and in imbuing the Halutzim with the national and social ideology prevailing in Palestine's labor camps and co-operatives. They must completely overcome the typical urban attitude of city youth, with its ambitions for easier and "higher" professions, and must acquire a deep, almost religious respect for manual labor.

In addition to this spiritual training, the prospective Halutzim must undergo a certain period of manual work, usually performed on training farms especially established for this purpose. Owing to the extremely small percentage of Jewish farmers in Galuth, the overwhelming majority of young men and women willing to do pioneering work in Palestine is ignorant of even the rudiments of agricultural work. The Histadrut insists that every labor immigrant to Palestine who receives his certificate\* through its

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\*The word "labor certificate" is used in Palestine to designate a permit for immigration given to prospective workers. It is the basis for obtaining entry-visas for labor immigrants.

offices shall have had some agricultural training, even if, after coming to Palestine, he become absorbed in industry or building. Agricultural training is considered essential not only to the development of Jewish farming in Palestine, but also to the spiritual uplifting of the future builders of Zion. To this intensive training in the Hakshara farms of Galuth are frequently attributed the high qualities of the average worker of Palestine, his willingness to work under trying conditions, his spirit of comradeship, and his readiness to share his modest earnings with less fortunate ones. In other words, the Hakshara in Galuth is actually a test of the adaptability of the Halutz for his tasks in Palestine.

The Hakshara groups in which Jewish young men and women in all parts of the world prepare themselves for their labor tasks in Palestine contain nearly 25,000 Halutzim. There are in addition thousands of other members of the "Hechalutz" and similar organizations who have not even begun their Hakshara because of limited training facilities; they are impatiently awaiting their turn.

The important work of Hakshara is under the supervision of the Histadrut which sends several delegates every year to manage the Hakshara groups and farms in various countries of the Galuth.

When the Halutz has accomplished his Hakshara and finally, in possession of the long dreamed-of "certificate," enters the gates of Palestine, he again receives great help from the Histadrut on whose shoulders rests largely the task of absorbing the labor-Aliyah in the economic life of the country. The Histadrut not only considers it its duty to provide the newcomer with work, but also helps him to adapt himself to the new ways of living and the new ideas accepted by the labor pioneers of Palestine. Nowhere in the world is an immigrant greeted with as much cordiality and in such a brotherly spirit as the newly arrived Halutz in Palestine.

## CREATING WORK FOR HALUTZIM

Considering themselves the heralds of a great mission—the upbuilding of a National Home for the scattered Jewish people—the Jewish workers in Palestine not only welcome the newly arrived Halutzim (which is in vivid contrast to the usually less idealistic attitude of most labor organizations, in other countries)—but also accept the responsibility for providing them with constructive work. The Histadrut has thus become the greatest job finder in Palestine. It has been largely instrumental in conquering new trades for Jewish Labor and in introducing to Palestine occupations hitherto unknown in that country. It may claim a great deal of credit for initiating Jews into various branches of the building industry, creating labor camps for highway construction, acquainting Jewish workers with work in the harbors, fishing and shipping. In times of depression and unemployment the Histadrut, through its “Merkaz Avodah” (Work Providing Office) and its net of labor exchanges (Employment Offices) energetically and ceaselessly urges the government, private companies, and individual capitalists to start new enterprises. In many cases the Histadrut, in order to extend the working possibilities for Jewish labor, and thereby to create more openings for immigrants, has itself become a contractor taking the usual business risks.

The first venture of this kind, the Solel Boneh, a large contracting cooperative for public works and building was started even prior to the formal foundation of the Histadrut. It has not only helped employ many hundreds of workers but has also served as a school of building and construction for people who had previously had no experience in these trades. True, the double capacity of a school and contracting office has proved very costly, and from the narrow viewpoint of a private business man the Solel Boneh may be considered a failure. But in the few years of its existence this first contracting enterprise of the His-



tadrut has been able to train hundreds of highly qualified workers in all lines of construction. It thus laid a solid foundation for the later development of a great Jewish building industry, in which thousands of workers earn wages incomparably higher than those in the other countries of the East.

### HISTADRUT AS CONTRACTOR

At present the contracting work of the Histadrut in building and construction is conducted by three separate offices established in the larger cities of the country: Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem. Each of these offices (Misrad Kablani) accepts work only in its own district and does not interfere with the business operations of the other two. These contracting offices have proved to be important factors in the construction of Palestine's cities. They build roads, construct all types of buildings for the government, for public institutions, and individuals. In 1935, they employed over 1,500 persons and completed work projects valued at \$3,500,000.

A similar activity is conducted by the "Yakhin," the agricultural contracting cooperative association, which started its operations in 1927. The Yakhin specializes in planting orange groves for owners who still live in Galuth. It also supervises other kinds of agricultural work and assists in the colonization of Palestine by people of means. In 1935, the Yakhin employed an average of 800 to 1,000 workers. It performed agricultural work amounting to \$600,000, and the area of citrus groves under its supervision reached 6,400 dunams.

Both the Yakhin and the urban contracting offices conduct their activities on a very practical basis. They lay great stress on the quality of their work, and do not engage in cut-throat competition with private contractors, a practice which indirectly would result in a disadvantage to

labor. They have been successful in accumulating comparatively large reserves, and can therefore conduct their current business on a cash basis. Thanks to these methods they have built up an excellent reputation in the business community of Palestine.

The contracting work of the Histadrut, which helps to increase the demand for Jewish labor, is only one of the devices it uses in order to establish the largest possible basis for Jewish labor immigration in Palestine. Still more important is its direct struggle to entrench Jewish labor in Jewish factories and on Jewish farms.

### JEWISH AND ARAB LABOR

This struggle for Jewish labor, sometimes called "Kibush Avoda" (the conquest of labor), is not impelled by animosity towards the Arab workers. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of the Histadrut members are sympathetically inclined toward the Arabs, and particularly toward the Arab workers. They believe, however, that Arab labor should be confined to Arab economy, where it enjoys a monopolistic position, and to the public works of the government. As a matter of fact, the position of the Arabs in such public works greatly exceeds their share in Palestine's population. Not less than 90% of the workers are Arabs in spite of the fact that they form only 68% of the population.

With the growing prosperity brought to Palestine by Jewish immigration, the Arab factories, shops, and farms are giving employment to an ever larger number of people. The beneficial results of Jewish immigration are reflected, to an even greater extent, in the constantly increasing public works activities of the government, made possible by revenues derived mainly from Jewish sources. Under these circumstances, the native Arabs of Palestine can find sufficient work in their natural sphere of economic activity, and no danger of Arab unemployment is caused by man-

ning Jewish enterprises with Jewish workers only. With all its friendliness to Arab workers, the Histadrut, therefore, considers it its duty actively to defend the principle of reserving all labor opportunities in Jewish enterprises exclusively for Jewish workers.

The Jewish labor leaders of Palestine are convinced that, should the Histadrut adopt a policy of "laissez faire," many Jewish capitalists, particularly in the field of agriculture, would prefer to employ cheaper Arab labor. Such cheap labor would be supplied by great masses of Arab immigrants from the neighboring countries with their extremely low standard of living. As a matter of fact the latest period of Palestine's prosperity (1932 to 1935) has already brought a considerable influx of "Haurani," Arab laborers from Syria and Transjordan, where the standard of living is much lower than in Palestine. It would be a suicidal policy to consider these "Haurani" who are bitterly opposed even by local Arab workers as entitled to jobs in Jewish economy.

All hopes for a Jewish Homeland would be frustrated if Palestine were to be built up by Jewish capital and preponderantly Arab labor. In such a case, not only would the Jews remain a hopeless minority in their "National Home," not only would the gates of the country be virtually closed to persecuted Jews from other countries who consider Palestine their only salvation, but the future of the Jewish "Yishuv" in Palestine would be no more secure than that of a typical Jewish community in Galuth. Any social or national upheaval in Palestine would then react against the Jews. Instead of assuring their future for generations to come, they would find themselves in the same hopeless position which is now the lot of their brethren in Eastern Europe. Not enmity to the Arab workers, but the need for self-preservation dictates the efforts of the Histadrut to strengthen Jewish labor in any enterprise owned by Jews in Palestine.

The general attitude of the leaders of the Histadrut towards the Arab Problem is clearly expressed in their famous slogan "not to rule, not to be ruled." They believe in the right of the Jew to come to Palestine and to settle on waste or neglected lands. They cannot imagine any honest understanding with the Arab people unless this fundamental right is recognized. Once it is recognized, they are ready to give the Arabs iron-clad guarantees of full equality in the future, independently of the numerical relation between the two peoples. They believe that the interests of the majority of Palestine's Arabs are not in conflict with Jewish immigration and colonization, and only its ruling strata may consider it an ultimate threat to their reactionary class domination.

### STRUGGLE FOR IMMIGRATION

One of the most important methods used by the Histadrut to achieve this aim is a continuous struggle for an increased immigration. Experience has shown that a sufficiently large immigration, strengthening the demand of Jewish labor for work, insures its penetration into Jewish factories and farms.

In its struggle for an always greater "Aliyah," the Histadrut meets not only the opposition of the Palestine government, which strives to restrict Jewish immigration as much as possible, but also the indifference, and even hostility of important groups of Jewish capitalists.

The richest plantation owners in Palestine, putting their immediate profits above considerations of the national future, prefer cheap and docile Arab workers to the more expensive and independent Jewish laborer.

Because of this attitude, the Histadrut, in its endeavor to insure to Jewish labor its proper share in the upbuilding of Palestine, cannot confine itself to a political struggle

with the mandatory power for a free immigration. In addition to this struggle in which the Histadrut is being aided by the Zionist movement and by Jewish public opinion throughout the World, the workers of Palestine must also fight for the rights of Jewish Labor on the inner Jewish front. They frequently exercise strong pressure on the Jewish capitalists who are reluctant to recognize the claim of Jewish labor to a predominant place in the new Jewish economy of the country. In several cases the Histadrut has even resorted to picketing Jewish citrus planters who had closed the gates of their groves to Jewish labor. This was done in specific instances where the particular orange grove had originally been planted and cultivated by Jewish labor, which was later supplanted by unorganized and cheaper Arab laborers, coming mainly from outside of Palestine. Jewish buildings constructed by Arab labor were similarly picketed. In some cases the Histadrut organized boycotts against employers of cheaper Arab labor to induce them to give more consideration to the demands of the Jewish workers.

The leaders of the Histadrut recognize, however, that their goal of assuring an influx of Jewish labor commensurate with the influx of Jewish capital cannot be achieved through political and economic pressure alone. They are not blind to the danger arising from the much lower wages and living standards of the Arabs, especially those coming from the neighboring countries of the East.

### ORGANIZATION OF ARAB WORKERS

The most direct way of avoiding the unfair competition of unorganized Arab labor would be, of course, to organize the Arabs and to raise their wages and living standards to those of the Jews. This, however, is easier said than done. The prevailing wages in a given country are largely governed by the standards of living of its population, and by its productive capacity. The standard of living of a

people cannot be raised overnight. Many years will have to elapse before the standard of living of the Arab masses, determined by the general conditions in the backward Orient, can be raised to the minimum already achieved by Jewish immigrants from the more civilized countries of Europe.

In spite of these difficulties, which are based on a great difference in cultural levels and economic backgrounds, the leaders of the Histadrut have frequently shown their willingness to assist the Arab workers in organizing themselves on a trade union basis. The methods to be adopted in organizing Arab workers is one of the hardest problems confronting the Histadrut. Some of its members, particularly those of the Left, strongly urge the Histadrut to open its doors to Arab workers who are ready to join its trade unions. The majority of Palestine's labor leaders are, however, of the opinion that the Histadrut, because of its specific function, the building of the Jewish National Home, is not suited, as such, to accept the Arabs in its own unions. They advocate, therefore, the establishment of separate Arab unions, to be affiliated with the Histadrut through a super-structure to be known as "The Workers' Alliance of Palestine." This solution, adopted as the official program of the Histadrut, makes the unionization of the Arabs dependent on the creation of a separate organization to cooperate as an entity with the Jewish unions of the same trade.

In its final form the "Workers' Alliance" would consist of two autonomous sections, a Jewish and an Arab one. The "Histadrut" is according to this conception the Jewish section of the future, all-embracing labor organization of the country.

Only in one case has a consistent effort been made to organize Jews and Arabs in one union. This is the Union of Railway, Postal and Telegraph Workers. This Union, which has been in existence for fifteen years, has proved

to be a practical success. It has survived even the recent era of prolonged Jewish-Arab strife. With this notable exception the Histadrut has not, thus far, been very successful in its efforts to organize the Arab workers. True, it led a number of major Arab strikes, which in most cases ended in important concessions wrung from the employers, but from the viewpoint of permanent organization, the results have been comparatively poor. In some cases, the Arab unions, organized with the assistance of the Histadrut, have practically ceased to exist, and in others they came under the destructive influence of the Arab nationalists who condemn any Jewish-Arab collaboration, and consequently reject the Histadrut and all its ways.

The opinion has been frequently expressed that the unsatisfactory results of the Histadrut's attempts to organize the Arab workers are due primarily to the devious and complicated organizational methods adopted for this purpose. In any case, the Histadrut has not yet reached a final conclusion, and a new effort to solve the problem in a practical and brotherly spirit may be expected. Until the unionization of the Arabs and the raising of their standard of living close the gap between the minimum wages acceptable to the workers of both nationalities, the Histadrut, striving to facilitate and to accelerate the further upbuilding of the Jewish National Home, will continue to adopt special means to establish Jewish labor in all branches of Palestine's Jewish economy. This problem is less pressing in the urban industries because of the higher qualifications and superior productive capacity of the Jewish worker. In agriculture, however, it remains as acute as ever.

### ENTRENCHING RURAL LABOR

Endeavoring, as it does, to secure the position of Jewish labor in agriculture as well as in industry, the Histadrut, in addition to its direct struggle for immigration and working opportunities, also resorts to less direct means for con-

structive readjustment. On the one hand, it strongly encourages cooperative agriculture with its total elimination of hired labor; on the other hand, it supports the efforts of the hired rural workers to gain a foothold in their villages by building little cottages, surrounded by vegetable gardens that will supply an important part of their food requirements. Eliminating rent payments, and making living cheaper by raising his own poultry and vegetables, the rural worker, while maintaining a more or less civilized standard of living, is still able to offer his labor at wages which lessen the advantages of outside competition and give Jewish agriculture a fair chance of holding its own in the hard struggle for foreign markets.

Recently, as an aftermath of the Arab attacks of 1936, Jewish labor greatly extended its position in private Jewish agriculture in Palestine. The Histadrut will certainly see to it that the new rural workers retain these important positions without lowering their standard of living to that of Arab farm hands.

The struggle for improved labor conditions and for a decent standard of living for all its members, is, in the eyes of the Histadrut, just as important as its struggle for the introduction of Jewish labor in Palestine. It demands recognition of its trade unions by the government, public institutions, and private employers. It strives to establish fair and equitable relations between employers and workers. The Histadrut does not wage war for the sake of war, nor does it demand concessions that would overtax the strength of the young national economy of Palestine. Strongly insisting on its right to call strikes, the Histadrut resorts to them only when all avenues of conciliation and compromise are closed. It gladly accepts the mediation of the Vaad Haleumi (National Council of Palestinian Jews) in labor struggles, and tries to stabilize labor conditions by long-term agreements between the employers and the trade union. The basis of such agreements must be the recog-



nition of the trade union, which necessarily means the recognition of the Histadrut. The practical benefits derived from such recognition consist in the employment of organized labor through the services of the Labor Exchanges of the Histadrut and the participation of the employers in the budget of the "Kupat Holim" (Workers' Sick Fund) as well as in accident and unemployment insurance. The contracts usually provide for arbitration of disputes, decent wages, and for an eight-hour day. Incidentally, Palestine is one of the very few countries where the eight-hour day is observed not only in industry but also in agriculture.

### THE STRUGGLE FOR LABOR LEGISLATION

Due to its untiring efforts, the Histadrut has recently succeeded in inducing the government to limit child labor and to pass laws for workmen's compensation in case of accidents or occupational diseases. The employment of children under 13 is now prohibited in industrial enterprises, and the extension of this prohibition to public works, mines and transportation is envisaged by the latest law concerning the employment of women and children. Children over 13, but under 16, must not be employed more than seven hours a day. The compensation for accidents occurring during work was recently increased from one pound to a pound and a half a week. Though these laws lag behind similar legislation adopted in more progressive countries, they are very much advanced as compared with the neighboring countries of the East, where the worker enjoys no protection whatsoever, and where the age of 13 is considered sufficient not only for marriage, but for hard work as well. There is no doubt that without the influence of Histadrut there would be no labor legislation in Palestine, and the working conditions would remain there at the medieval level prevailing in the neighboring Arab countries. In any case, a start has been made, and further improvements may follow.

## THE HISTADRUT AS A COLONIZING AGENCY

The readiness of the Histadrut to serve as an instrument for the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home finds its highest expression in its diversified colonizing activities. Not only does Histadrut pave the way for Jewish colonization by training the Halutzim in Galuth for agricultural work, but it actually participates in the colonization work by selecting the human material for new workers' settlements and by helping to secure the financial means necessary for their establishment. The Union of Agricultural Workers (Merkaz Haklai) is one of the most important branches of this all-embracing organization. It is not only a trade union, but a colonization office as well. In fact, all Zionist colonization in Palestine is effected in close co-operation with the Agricultural Department of the Histadrut.

The colonization work of the Histadrut is conducted on land owned by the National Fund. This land does not become the private property of the settlers, but remains the common possession of the nation, leased to the tillers of the soil on long-term, renewable contracts.\* The Histadrut is not opposed to individual colonization on private land so long as it is financed by public funds. It firmly believes, however, that only those settlers are entitled to public support who, by renouncing private rights to the land they cultivate, are creating thereby a strong and impenetrable wall of defense against exploitation, land speculation, and other destructive phenomena which may mar the structure of the Jewish National Home.

At present, the labor settlements closely affiliated with the Histadrut cultivate not less than 200,000 dunams in various regions of Palestine. There are eighty definitely established and 19 new settlements of various types, with a total of 6,500 working families (a population of 20,236)

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\*A certain number of workers' settlements also exist on the land of the PICA, established in Palestine by the late Baron Rothschild.

who gain their living solely by cultivating the soil. Since 1920, when the Histadrut was founded, the total number of members in all labor settlements has increased tenfold.

## TYPES OF LABOR SETTLEMENTS

The guiding principle of labor settlements in Palestine is "self-labor." More explicitly, this means that all the necessary work must be done by the settler himself without any hired help whatsoever.

Strict adherence to this principle requires rare strength. From time immemorial agriculture the world over has been closely linked with ruthless exploitation and abject slavery. For many generations the Arab agriculture of Palestine has provided a basis on which a social order of effendi masters and fellah slaves was built. Even the Jewish farmers in the private colonies, most of which were founded by Baron Rothschild, proved unable to resist the temptation of cheap labor.

The ability of Palestine's labor settlements to preserve the fundamental principle of self-labor and still attain a fair amount of prosperity must, under these circumstances, be recognized as an amazing achievement. This accomplishment was made possible through strenuous labor, mutual aid among the settlers, and the moral support of Palestine's labor movement as a whole.

There are two fundamental types of labor settlement in Palestine. The first, called "Moshav," consists of a certain number of individual farmers to each of whom is allotted a definite parcel of land for his own farm. The second is the "Kvutza," a typical commune in which the members not only work together and own the fruits of their labor in common, but where even the distribution of products and services is organized on a collective basis.

Even the Moshav, which most nearly approaches the ordinary European village is imbued with a strong social

spirit rarely found among peasants or farmers of other countries. There is a great deal of mutual help in the Moshavim. For instance, their statutes provide that in case one of their members is too ill to attend his farm, his fellow settlers must take turns in cultivating his land.

The social spirit dominating the Moshavim is further reflected in the widespread application of cooperative principles, especially in the sale of farm products and the purchase of manufactured articles. A further step towards cooperation was recently taken when the members of several Moshavim expressed their preference for collective cultivation of their grain fields, restricting their individual efforts to dairying, poultry raising, vegetable gardening, and fruit-growing. Such a spirit of solidarity, coupled with the fact that the land of the Moshavim does not belong to their members as private property but remains the permanent possession of the Jewish National Fund, actually makes the Moshavim a semi-collective settlement where the principles of individual responsibility are combined in a remarkable way with mutual aid and common work.

The first Moshavim of this modern type—Nahalal and Kfar Yehezkiel were founded in the summer of 1921 at the beginning of the colonizing activities in the valley of Esdraelon. These Moshavim, like the later settlements of the same type, are based, economically, on mixed farming. Each farm includes a grain field, a fruit orchard, a vegetable garden, a cow-barn, a poultry crop and several beehives. The unit of land per family is approximately 120 dunams (about 30 acres) in locations where no artificial irrigation is used, and the farmer is totally dependent on the whims of the weather. In other settlements, where there is an abundant water supply for irrigation purposes, a member of Moshav is content with a much smaller area of land. For instance, 20 to 25 dunams is considered a sufficient unit for a working farmer in the plantation zone of Palestine.

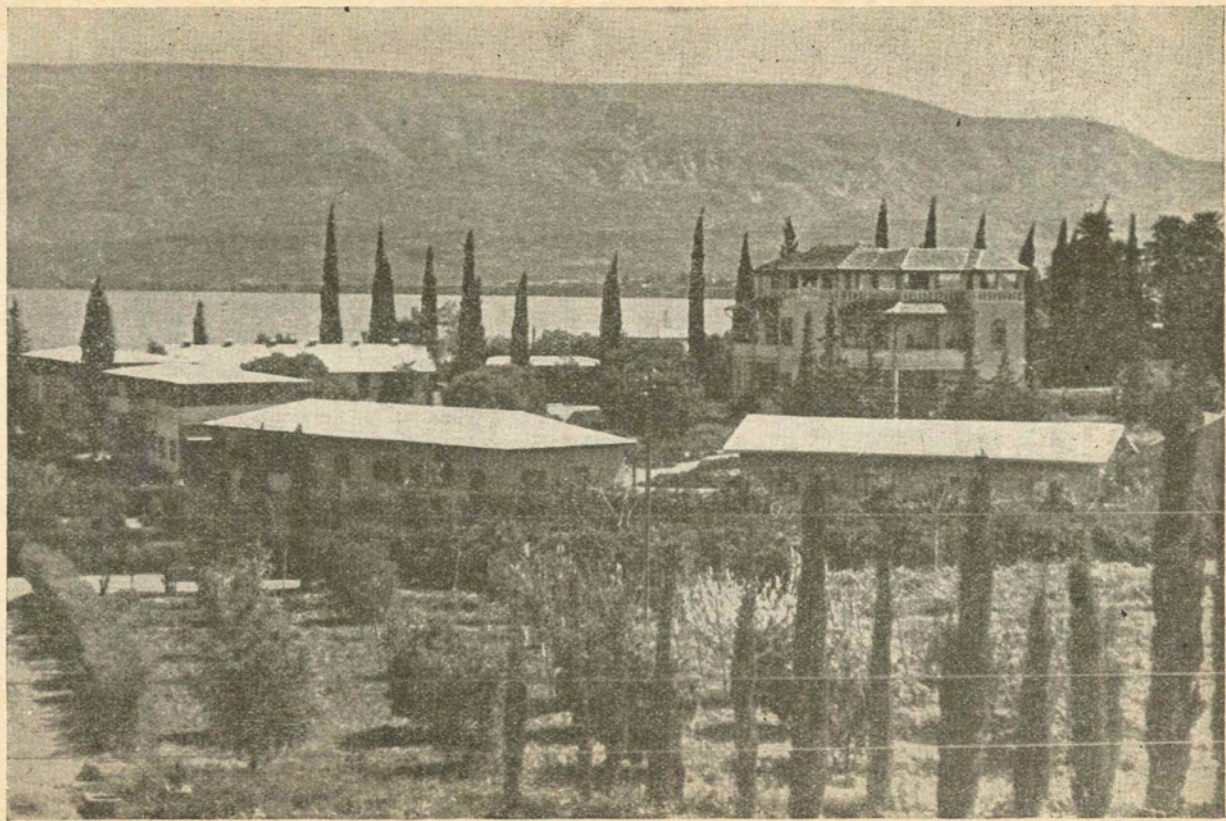
In spite of the diversity of their farming activities and the great intensity of cultivation, the Moshavim suffered for many years from scarcity and poverty. Because of the primitive conditions encountered at the beginning of their colonization, the members were forced to expend an unduly large share of their efforts on general improvements that could not bring them immediate returns. Many years passed before the settlers were able to increase the productivity of their utterly exhausted fields to a point which insures a reasonable degree of prosperity.

### COLLECTIVE FARMS

To the principles of self-labor and national land ownership accepted in the Moshavim, the Kvutza—the collective farm of Palestine—adds the very advanced principle of communal work and life. The Kvutza is the most daring and original creation of Palestine's labor movement. It resembles a large working family with an absolutely equal standard of living for all its members. A common kitchen, a collective Children's Home, and a common Commissary cater to the various needs of the community. There is an equal distribution of products and services and an equal allotment of living quarters.

No money is used in the internal relations among the Kvutza members. No individual accounts are kept for any one of them. Only the external financial relations of the Kvutza are governed by the usual capitalistic standards. Obviously it must sell its products for money, necessary for the repayment of loans, for improvements on the farm and for providing its members with those means of life that must be acquired from the outside.

The most striking feature of the Kvutza is its "Children's Home," always the largest and most comfortable building in the collective settlement. From the moment of their birth the children of the members spend all their time, both day and night, in this children's house. They usual-



*Dagania A.—Oldest Kvutza*

ly see their parents during the mid-day recess and after working hours in the evening. Separated into several age-groups, they pass the rest of the time under the supervision of trained nurses and teachers, who are usually members of the Kvutza. From time to time the Kvutza releases some of its women members for nursing courses to qualify them further for this important work.

The first Kvutza, "Dagania" was founded in 1909 by a group of workers who leased from the National Fund a tract of land in the Jordan Valley adjacent to Lake Tiberias, and settled there on a strictly collective basis. In spite of the very hot climate of that region, and the frequent epidemics of malaria, the pioneers of Dagania persisted in their efforts and finally achieved such a degree of success that their self-supporting community has come to be regarded as an example and an inspiration for further settlements of this kind.

During the early years of their existence the Kvutzot were frequently criticized as being hopelessly Utopian. They were branded as a wasteful undertaking that must eventually perish because of the influence of capitalistic forces from without. Fortunately, these apprehensions proved to be unfounded. The Kvutzot have succeeded in overcoming the greatest difficulties and obstacles, and the majority of them are now on a self-sustaining basis. Even the most carping of their former critics now recognize the value of the Kvutza, especially in the colonization of new and perilous regions.

## KIBUTZ AND IRGUN

In addition to fully established workers' settlements, there exist in Palestine two transitional forms of colonization, consisting of workers who, while earning their living by outside work, are at the same time engaged in building up their own farm as a nucleus of future colonization. These transitional forms are the Kibutz and the Irgun.

The fundamental differences between them is that the first prefers the collective farm as the method of their future colonization and the second prefers the individual homestead.

The Kibutz is actually a Kvutza in the making. Its members, though not yet settled on land, organize their life on the collective basis prevailing in the Kvutza. They live as a typical commune whose property and revenue belong without exception to all of them collectively. The only distinction between the Kibutz and the Kvutza consists in the fact that the Kibutz is not yet in possession of a tract of land, sufficient for all its members. Whereas the Kvutza is definitely established on the soil as the sole means of livelihood for all its members, the majority of the members of the Kibutz are still doing outside work for wages. Only a minority of them are already engaged in building up their own farm with a view to its development on an ever larger scale. The savings accumulated from the wages of the majority are invested in the farm, in the hope that an ever increasing number of the Kibutz members will in time be able to work there. Even in cases where hired work is considered a permanent part of the structure of the Kibutz, there is a general tendency to widen its own agricultural base as far as possible. At the beginning of 1937, there were 43 Kibutzim and Kvutzot, with a total of 7,830 members. Together with dependents, they had a population of 11,259.

Like the Kibutz, the Irgun consists of a group of workers who, while still engaged in hired work in the cities or private colonies, are gradually preparing for future settlement on the land. Contrary to the Kibutz, the Irgun does not strive to establish a collective farm with its communal way of living. Its ultimate goal is a "Moshav" where every settler, even if not possessing his land as private property, is still allotted a definite parcel of land to be cultivated by his individual efforts. The Histadrut leaves its



members a free choice between these two fundamental colonization forms. Its leaders are ready to concede that not everybody is fitted mentally and temperamentally for the full communal way of living existing in the Kvutzot. They consider individual colonization just as useful for the upbuilding of the country as long as it is conducted on the land of the National Fund and is not based on the exploitation of hired labor.

### ECONOMIC FREEDOM IN THE HISTADRUT

The benevolent neutrality adopted by the Histadrut towards the two main forms of labor colonization is one of the characteristic traits of its whole economic activity. The Histadrut does not strive towards uniformity in all its undertakings; it grants the greatest possible autonomy to its institutions so long as they do not transgress its fundamental principles of social equality. The leaders of the Histadrut are proud of the fact that every Kvutza founded in Palestine is the result of the free initiative of its members. The members of the Kvutzot chose the communal basis of their collective farms, not because of pressure or even persuasion from above, but of their own free will. In this fact lies the main difference between the collective farms of Palestine and the Kolhozes of Soviet Russia. Herein also lies the explanation of the much greater economic success of the former.

Even now, after thirty years of creative experiments, which have naturally resulted in some generally accepted standards, the Kvutzot and Moshavim of Palestine are far from uniform. Although identical in its fundamental outlook with other settlements of this type, each Kvutza and each Moshav has its own constitution that may embody peculiar traits of its own. There are, for instance, Kvutzot where nearly all work is done in rotation, and there are also Kvutzot with a permanent division of agricultural work among specialized members. There are Moshavim where all agricultural work is done by their members as

individuals, and there exist also Moshavim where an important part of their agriculture, the cultivation of grain and animal feed, is conducted on a cooperative basis. It would be a false presumption to consider this variety of forms as proof of too loose contact among settlements of the same type. Conferences of Kvutzot and Moshavim at which problems of mutual interest are considered, experiences weighed, and resolutions governing further conduct accepted, take place periodically. The respective settlements are not, however, obliged to follow blindly the resolutions adopted at these conferences. No reforms are introduced without independent consideration of the problems of the given Kvutza or Moshav. Thus, Palestine's labor settlements have not become stagnated in frozen patterns. They are still in the process of continuous experimentation. They represent not only a great social achievement, but a living and always active social laboratory.

### AGRICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The labor settlements—the collective Kvutzot as well as the individualistic Moshavim—were the pioneers of mixed farming in Palestine. By aggressive and courageous experimentation they introduced new methods of agricultural work into Palestine, and brought their livestock, poultry-raising and vegetable-growing to a high level of productivity. The use of modern scientific methods adapted to Palestine's climatic conditions raised their average wheat crop to 20 bushels per acre compared with the 12-bushel average yield of the neighboring Arab peasant. A milch cow in a Jewish workers' settlement is counted upon to supply 3,500 quarts of milk per year as compared with 800 quarts given by an average Arab cow. The average hen in a Jewish settlement lays 150 eggs a year, while the Arab peasant gets no more than half this number from his hen. In certain branches of agriculture the farms affiliated with the Histadrut have equalled and even sur-

passed the achievements of the highly developed agricultural countries.

The economic progress of the labor settlements is strikingly reflected in the phenomenal increase of the sales of the "Tnuva," a cooperative agency established by the Histadrut for the marketing of the products of the workers' settlements. In 1929 its sales of milk, dairy products, vegetables, eggs, poultry, bananas, honey, etc., amounted to no more than \$150,000 a year. At present its sales approach an annual total of \$3,500,000. They include the products of 150 villages and collective farms.

Lately, the Tnuva has entered the field of processing farm products on an increasing scale. It maintains three modern dairies where butter, cheese, and condensed milk are manufactured under scientific methods and on the principles of mass production. It also acquired a small factory producing "Tsuf," a non-alcoholic drink made from Palestine's excellent honey, and is cautiously entering the important field of canning, a step that may some day be of great significance in Palestine's agriculture.

A continually increasing percentage of the citrus fruits exported from the orchards of the collective farms, labor settlements, and private orchards employing organized Jewish labor is being exported through the cooperative marketing society "Hit." This marketing agency, organized by the "Hamashbir," "Yakhin" and "Tnuva," (its name is composed of the initials of the Hebrew names) exported nearly 350,000 boxes of oranges and grapefruit last year, most of which were sold to cooperative wholesale societies in England and Scotland.

The success of the "Hit" has encouraged efforts to extend cooperative exporting activities to other farm products, such as wine, olive oil, fresh vegetables, grapes,—that may find a ready market in foreign countries. These efforts are still in their infancy, but there is no doubt that, with its general tendency to get a foothold in all branches

of Palestine's economy, the Histadrut will not allow this important economic task to remain a monopoly of private capital. The application of cooperative principles to the field of Palestine's exports would greatly help to create permanent foreign markets for its high grade agricultural products. With few exceptions, private capital has failed dismally in this task because it has usually put immediate profits above the goal of assuring a lasting future market for Palestine's products. Furthermore, it has proved unable to maintain a high standard of exported goods.

The growing productivity of the labor settlements, and the resulting improvement in their economic condition, have made it possible for most of them to begin repayment of the colonization loans granted to them by the Keren Hayesod. These repayments, in turn, were accepted as the main guarantee of a substantial loan, received by the Keren Hayesod from bankers in London.

#### ASSISTANCE TO RELATIVES

The agricultural settlements of the Histadrut are now able not only to provide their members with the bare necessities of life, but even to satisfy some of their other demands. For instance, assistance to relatives in Eastern Europe is now considered an inevitable and important item in most agricultural settlements. In many cases the Kvutza, at the request of its members, allots the money necessary for bringing over their parents and other close relatives from Poland, Roumania, Russia, and other Eastern European countries, thus saving them from actual starvation.

The presence of parents and other elderly relatives among the members of the Kvutza has raised a number of peculiar problems which are now nearing a rational solution. In the first place, these elderly people, most of whom are strongly attached to religious traditions, demand a stricter observance of the dietary laws. Respecting the religious convictions of their parents, their unorthodox chil-

dren usually offer them the use of a separate kitchen, which is run by the parents themselves strictly in accordance with the dietary laws.

A more complicated problem has been that of finding some kinds of productive occupation for the older people that would assure their usefulness in the work of the Kvtza and at the same time free them of the disagreeable feeling of being pensioners of their none too wealthy children. As a general rule, a rationally conducted agriculture can yield some suitable and profitable occupations for elderly people, provided that they are not complete invalids. On the whole, the Kvutzot have succeeded in finding such occupations, even if in a few instances they have been compelled to change some of their previous rules concerning the rotation of agricultural work among their members. There is no doubt that the members of the Kvutzot, who have repeatedly proved their ability to overcome the most difficult obstacles, will finally solve this new problem in a practical and dignified manner. In this task they are being helped by the fine spirit frequently shown by their parents, who begin to understand and respect the ideals of their children.

The progress of the workers' settlements is especially remarkable when considered in the light of the tremendous difficulties under which this experiment has to be conducted. The land was desolate, without roads, without wells, without agricultural traditions. The young settlers, who had had no previous agricultural experience, and no scientific advice, frequently had to grope in the dark; a great deal of their energy was wasted before a basis for their existence was found. All these difficulties were nevertheless conquered, and in the older settlements a second generation has now grown up which is gradually taking over their work and management. The young generation of the Kvutzot does not desert the farm for the more alluring cities. Brought up in natural surroundings and imbued

with the idealistic spirit of their parents, these young men and young women consider the continuation of the agricultural work begun by their elders their sacred trust and duty. No other achievement of the labor pioneers of Palestine can lay greater claim to starving as a basis of inner pride and moral satisfaction.

### URBAN COOPERATIVES

Simultaneously with the appearance of the first rural cooperatives, an effort was made to introduce cooperative principles into the field of urban production. With the assistance of the "Palestine Workers' Fund," founded in 1909 by the leaders of the Poale Zion movement in Galuth, the first two cooperatives of this kind were established in Haifa in 1912. One of them, "Carmel," operated a carpentering and furniture shop; the other, "Amal," a metal foundry and mechanical repair shop. Both cooperatives have proved a great success. They have survived the trying war years and, gradually enlarging their productive capacity, they have been able to accept a growing number of members. With the exception of the initial grant from the "Palestine Workers' Fund," they have been self-supporting and were even able to show some profit, which has been applied to the enlargement of their plants and the modernization of their machinery.

The success of these first two urban cooperatives has encouraged the formation of other workers' groups which aimed at establishing cooperative shops in their respective trades. Some of them have succeeded, others have failed. The failures were largely due to lack of capital and to the ruthless competition of better equipped capitalist undertakings. The final result of these efforts is the existence of a great many strong urban cooperatives which have succeeded in overcoming their initial difficulties and in emerging victorious despite the early years of adversity.

The Histadrut, which has not only encouraged these cooperative undertakings, but in some instances has even

helped to finance them, deserves a great deal of credit for their success and for their very existence. Most of the cooperatives, recognizing the beneficial role of the Histadrut in their development, voluntarily accept its advice and submit to its supervision. The most important of them have consented to assure this supervision legally and for all time to come, by giving the Histadrut a definite number of founders' shares with controlling power.

The control of the Histadrut is exercised mainly to safeguard the cooperative character of these undertakings and to prevent them from degenerating into capitalistic partnerships. The Histadrut does not misuse its control to dictate their business policy or to influence their decisions in matters concerning their own development. In such matters they enjoy complete autonomy exercised by their members in a democratic way.

At the beginning of 1936, there were 76 urban cooperatives affiliated with the Histadrut through its "Workers' Cooperative Societies' Auditing Union." Forty-six of them were engaged in actual production, twenty-five in transportation, and five in restaurant service. In 1935, the total amount of business done by them reached \$6,180,000. The larger part of this sum, \$3,780,000 represents the gross income of the motor cooperatives; \$2,040,000, the yearly output of the producers' cooperatives; and \$360,000, the sales of the cooperative restaurants. The total membership of all these cooperatives at the beginning of 1936 amounted to 2792.

These figures do not, however, give a complete picture of the cooperative movement in urban production and services. In addition to the cooperatives listed above there are a number of cooperative undertakings which, though largely organized by members of the Histadrut, do not as yet accept its leadership and supervision. Besides, many cooperatives were started after the last census had been taken. Altogether, Palestine at the present time (July, 1937) numbers about one hundred urban cooperatives

with a total membership of 3,500. To this total membership must be added a much smaller number (370 at the beginning of 1936) of hired workers and apprentices employed in the cooperatives.

Among the 46 producers' cooperatives which are under the leadership of the Histadrut are included ten factories for manufacturing building materials (mostly cement products), nine wood-working factories, two printing shops, two shoe factories, three clothing shops, five metal factories, two electrical contracting groups, and five bakeries.

### HIRED LABOR IN COOPERATIVES

The employment of hired workers, even in small numbers, by Palestine's cooperatives is considered a grave departure from strictly cooperative principles by many Histadrut leaders. They believe that even a small number of hired workers may in time become a serious menace to the integrity of the cooperative. The leaders of the cooperatives, however, have advanced important economic reasons for permitting certain exceptions to the established rule. They explain the presence of hired workers, whose number is smaller than that of apprentices, by seasonal and temporary needs. There are times when the cooperative does not feel justified in rejecting temporary and urgent orders that may exceed its usual productive capacity. Such are especially justified when there are a number of unemployed in the trade as a whole. On the other hand, the cooperative is reluctant to accept new members on a permanent basis unless it is fairly well assured of its ability to provide them with steady work.

Another reason which, in the opinion of the cooperatives, justifies the presence of a limited number of hired workers is the need to test the trade ability and social fitness of a new worker for several months before he is accepted as a permanent member of the organization. The whole success of Palestine's cooperative movement has



been based largely on the comradesly spirit of its members and their ability to adjust themselves voluntarily to common needs. An indiscriminate acceptance of new members before the older ones have had an opportunity to observe them in daily work and social intercourse would create the same grave psychological problem as that which wrecked most of the cooperatives founded generations ago by the "Utopian Socialists" (Owen, Fourier, etc.). As a matter of fact, a hired worker whose work and personality prove to be satisfactory to the members of the cooperative is usually accepted as a fully qualified member before the end of a year. Most of the leaders of the Histadrut recognize the validity of these arguments and are inclined to allow a limited percentage of hired labor with the stipulation that it shall at no time assume a permanent character. They believe themselves strong enough to prevent these exceptions from becoming an actual danger to the cooperative character of the movement.

The employment of apprentices by the cooperatives does not give rise to much controversy. The argument is frequently heard that the upbuilding of Palestine requires the greatest possible number of qualified workers. Refusal to accept apprentices would, therefore, be against the best interests of the National Home. In some cases the cooperatives have even been urged by other Histadrut bodies—the "Organization of Juvenile Workers," for instance—to make room for a few apprentices, since the latter are of course better treated there than in capitalist workshops.

Unlike the agrarian Kvutzot, the members of the urban cooperatives observe the principles of cooperation only with regard to production: they do not organize consumption on a collective basis. The members of these cooperatives do not share housing accommodations nor partake of meals together; nor do they raise their children in common children's houses. Every member lives his own life, and the cooperative relations begin and end in the shop. Moreover, the members of the urban cooperatives do not

all draw equal compensation for their work as do those of the collective farms. The wages in the urban cooperatives vary according to the type of work executed and according to the skill of the members, although these discrepancies are usually smaller than in capitalistic undertakings in the same trade. There is, however, equal participation in the dividends which remain after wages are paid and all other expenses defrayed.

### TRANSPORT COOPERATIVES

The most successful urban cooperatives are those engaged in motor transportation. Practically all the commercial traffic on Palestine's roads—insofar as Jews are concerned—is monopolized by cooperatives that have attained a fairly high standard of efficiency and regularity. Almost all the buses connecting the various Jewish colonies with one another and with the main cities of the country are operated by cooperatives. A cooperative likewise holds the concession for operating buses on the streets of Tel Aviv. In 1936 it handled about 40,000,000 passengers. The transporting of citrus fruits and building materials within the country is also largely concentrated in the hands of cooperatives.

All the transport cooperatives are united into a central association which coordinates the traffic schedules, builds joint garages, maintains repair shops, and organizes joint purchasing of materials. It also helps its members to build homes on a cooperative basis. Some of the most attractive workers' suburbs near the main cities of Palestine were built by the members of the transport cooperatives, who enjoy a higher standard of wages than that prevailing in most other trades.

During the recent Arab riots, the members of the transport cooperatives, some times criticized by lower paid workers as a kind of "labor aristocracy," endeared themselves to the hearts of the Yishuv by the quiet heroism they displayed in the face of imminent danger. At a time when

every Jewish bus or truck was a target for Arab snipers on all the main roads of the country, the drivers belonging to these cooperatives never shirked their task. Never was there a lack of volunteers who, though completely unarmed, were ready to serve on the most dangerous roads to take the place of comrades killed or wounded in the fulfillment of their duty. And this was done, as a matter of course, without any boasting or posing as heroes. This modest, unostentatious heroism of the transport cooperators was one of the most admirable features in the behavior of the Yishuv which, confronted by an outburst of extreme savagery, did not lose its human dignity and did not stoop to base acts of indiscriminate retaliation.

It is not to be expected, of course, that the urban cooperatives should play as important a role in Palestine's industry as the rural cooperatives do in agriculture. The obvious reason is the greater eagerness of private capital to engage in industrial enterprises rather than in agricultural pursuits. With the exception of citrus plantations, which, because of their semi-speculative character, were a favorite field for private initiative, agricultural enterprise did not attract private capital, but was left mainly to Zionist funds. It is quite natural that these funds, bearing, as they perforce do, the greatest burden of rural colonization, have preferred to use new, modern methods that shall forever assure Jewish labor its place in Palestine's agriculture. It was early recognized that the best way to achieve this aim was to build new colonies on a cooperative basis. Therefore the cooperative farm became a standard form of Jewish colonization in Palestine.

There is, on the other hand, no lack of private capital for industrial undertakings, which, as a general rule, employ organized Jewish labor. That is why urban cooperatives did not receive any substantial aid from national funds. From the beginning they have had to rely on the modest savings of their members and sometimes on the limited financial resources of the Workers' Fund and the

Histadrut. This situation has naturally hampered their growth, especially in those branches of industry which require a large initial investment of capital.

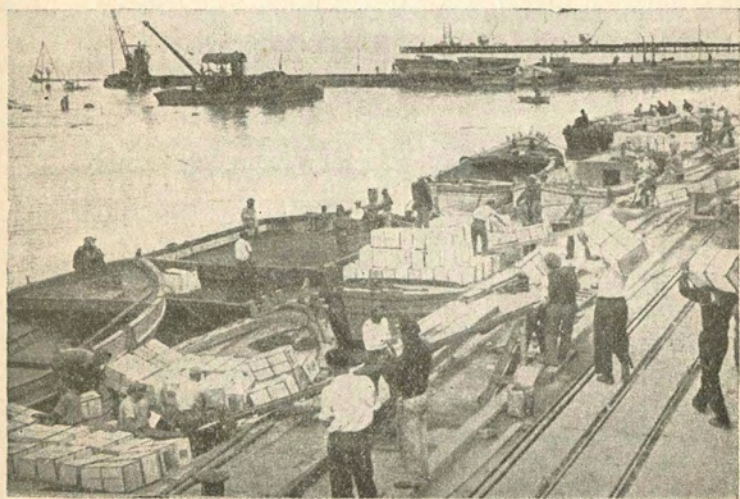
In spite of these handicaps, the urban cooperatives constitute an important feature of Palestine's Jewish economy. There is every reason to expect their greater growth and development in the future.

### MARITIME TRADES

In its endeavor to broaden the economic basis of the Yishuv, and to insure an opportunity to earn a living for the maximum number of labor immigrants, the Histadrut is actively engaged in organizing cooperatives and contracting groups in branches of national economy hitherto closed to Jewish labor. At present it lays the greatest emphasis on the introduction of Jewish labor into the fields of fishing, shipping, water transportation, lighterage, stevedoring, and other branches of maritime work. It is tirelessly active in organizing workers' groups devoted to such occupations, and in providing them with instructors and training opportunities. Its efforts are extended even to the Galuth. Here Jewish workers occupied in maritime trades,—which is a rare exception,—are encouraged to emigrate to Palestine, where they form a nucleus for recently organized groups of sea and harbor workers. Especially useful in this respect have been the Jews of Salonica,—the main harbor of Macedonia, now belonging to Greece—where Jews have for generations been engaged in all branches of maritime work.\* In general there is a large percentage of Oriental Jews among the Palestinian workers who are penetrating into these new occupations.

\*In Turkish times no loading or unloading of boats was done in Salonica on Saturday because Jewish stevedores, forming the greatest majority of its harbor workers, refused to work on their sacred day of rest. After the War, anti-Semitic Greeks, brutally misusing their political power, gradually eliminated the Jews from most of their former trades. Thus the economic situation of Salonica's Jews has grown desperate, and many of them are dreaming of a "certificate" to Palestine as their only ray of hope.

These efforts to introduce Jews to maritime work, have recently received a strong impetus because of the construction of a harbor in Tel Aviv, after the outbreak of the latest Arab riots had made it impossible for the Jews to use the old Arab port in neighboring Jaffa. Only a year old and still very primitive in its facilities, this improvised harbor has grown rapidly in size and importance. In the beginning of 1937, the "Davar," the daily newspaper of the Histadrut, proudly reported an average of 550 workers, all Jews, steadily employed in the new harbor. And this is only a start!



*"Prika" loading at the Tel Aviv Port*

In order to consolidate its maritime activities, the Histadrut has recently founded a special corporation, "Nachshon," whose task it is to finance the operations of new cooperative groups which are gaining a strong foothold in the maritime field. It will also act as a holding company for the shares acquired by the Histadrut and its members in the new harbor of Tel Aviv. "Nachshon" is predestined

to become the main instrument in the endeavor of the Histadrut to introduce Jews in large numbers into maritime trades. It may be compared with the "Nir," which fulfills the same task and through the same means in the field of agriculture.

Similar attempts had previously been made by the Histadrut to introduce Jewish labor into construction work, the preparation of building materials, quarrying, extraction of minerals (Dead Sea Concession), etc. In every case the systematic efforts of the Histadrut as a whole gave the initial impetus for the "conquest" of working positions in new labor fields. Later, these positions were secured and enlarged by the autonomous efforts of groups and individuals, who quickly acquired the necessary skill and qualifications.

### CONSUMERS' COOPERATIVES

Compared with the great strides of the cooperative movement in the field of production, the cooperative achievements of Palestine's labor movement in retail commerce are much less imposing. Contrary to the practice of other countries, the cooperative enterprises of Palestine did not begin with consumption, usually considered the easiest and most promising field for cooperative organization. As pioneers in a new country, Palestine's workers were primarily concerned with production and were less interested in the problems of consumption. Palestine has never been a country of natural immigration, where labor flocks after capital has prepared opportunities for work. In many cases Palestine's labor pioneers had to create their own jobs, and were, therefore, forced to direct their cooperative efforts to the most unusual and difficult tasks. They did not pay much attention to cooperative groceries and other elementary undertakings, particularly since these economic functions had from the beginning been fulfilled by representatives of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie. The

latter are strongly entrenched in this field and would offer the most formidable opposition to cooperative competitors.

A natural exception were the workers' settlements, which, as a matter of principle, do not allow private traders to open shops on their territory. In such settlements, even those based on individual cultivation of the soil, all purchasing was organized from the very beginning through their own cooperative stores.

Lately, however, the Histadrut has been making systematic efforts to strengthen its cooperative positions in the field of consumption. In addition to "Tnuva," "Hamashbir," and "Hit," the older and most important cooperative organizations handling the sale of agricultural products and the supply of manufactured goods to the workers' villages, it now encourages the foundation of local cooperative stores operated on more usual lines. These cooperative stores are even beginning to penetrate the cities, which up to now have been the exclusive domain of private commerce.\*

The consumers' cooperatives in the villages show an interesting tendency to combine their functions of supplying consumers' goods for the farmers with the task of marketing their agricultural products. The same store that sells shoes, sugar, shirts, rice, etc., to its members collects their milk, eggs, and honey for delivery to the "Tnuva." By this unique method, these "consumers-producers' cooperatives" seem to achieve considerable saving for their members, both as consumers and as producers.

### COOPERATIVE CREDIT

Much credit is due the Histadrut for its share in the founding of the very useful "Workers' Loan Associations." On the one hand, they provide help in times of economic

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\*The functions and activities of "Tnuva," "Hamashbir" and "Hit" have been described in more detail in connection with the account of the agricultural activities of the Histadruth. (p. 45)

adversity, by extending certain credit facilities to their members; on the other hand, they stimulate their participants to accumulate savings in times of prosperity.

The loan associations are particularly useful when a worker has a chance to buy a building lot on the outskirts of his colony, to erect a bungalow on a previously acquired lot, to buy a cow,—all important steps towards greater economic independence—, to enter an urban cooperative requiring the financial participation of the new member, or to take advantage of any other constructive opportunity of this type. Whatever economic progress is made by the worker as an individual is usually achieved with the assistance of his Loan Association. These small credit institutions thus fulfill a highly important task in the upbuilding of the country.

In October, 1936, Palestine numbered twenty-five Workers' Loan Associations, controlled by the Histadrut, with a membership of 24,000 and total assets of \$2,580,000. The riots of 1936 did not weaken them. On the contrary, their phenomenal growth continued through the worst times experienced by the Jews of Palestine.\*

### THE WORKERS' BANK

The achievements of the Histadrut in the field of credit cooperation are crowned by the Workers' Bank, established in 1921 with the financial assistance of the Zionist Organization. The reason for this aid was the recognition that adequate credit could make labor a most important factor in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home. Started with a nominal capital of \$500,000—a part of it was not realized at that time because of unsold shares—the Bank

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\*The Workers' Loan Associations are only a part of the cooperative credit structure of Palestine. Many members of the Histadrut, especially professionals and qualified workers, belong to general Credit Unions, which include a still greater number of artisans and small tradesmen. At the beginning of 1936, Palestine possessed 50 Credit Unions of this type, the total amount of their deposits reaching \$10,800,000.



has now a fully-paid-up capital of \$750,000 and an accumulated reserve of \$150,000. In the middle of 1936 its deposits amounted to more than \$2,000,000, and the total loans granted during that turbulent year reached the sum of \$2,800,000.

The Workers' Bank does not extend credit to individuals, all its loans being made to collective farms, urban cooperatives, home building associations, contracting offices, and other cooperative institutions affiliated with the Histadrut. In spite of the prejudices prevailing in capitalistic banks concerning the financial stability of Workers' Cooperatives, the Workers' Bank has never sustained an important loss on any of its grants of credit. It shows an enviable record of profits and dividends.

A review of the activities of the Histadrut in the field of financial cooperation would be incomplete without mention of the "Hassneh," the Workers' Insurance Society, organized in 1925 jointly with the "Jewish National Workers' Alliance" of America. At the time of its foundation the "Hassneh" was confronted with a great many difficulties. First, Palestine's workers, mostly newcomers from countries of oppression, were not able to put away savings sufficient to serve as a basis for insurance. Every penny saved by a Palestinian worker at that time was invested in a Home Building Association, or some other organization that promised him a greater degree of economic stability. Under these circumstances, insurance, however small, was considered a luxury. Furthermore, many of the newcomers, reared in the belief that insurance could be successfully sold only by mammoth corporations with tremendous financial backing, looked upon mutual insurance by a small workers' cooperative with distrust.

With the raising of the general standard of living and with the increasing confidence in the financial stability of the "Hassneh," workers' insurance began to play a more important role in Palestine's labor economy.

At present, no less than 4000 workers are insured by the "Hassneh" for a total of \$2,800,000. Previously limited to life insurance, the "Hassneh" has lately begun to penetrate the fields of fire and crop insurance and to undertake, jointly with private Jewish insurance companies of Palestine, the insurance of orchards and other agricultural property against destruction caused by national and political riots. Its funds and reserves assure it a strong financial position, and in general it shows promise of becoming one of the most important financial institutions of the Jewish labor community of Palestine.

### "NIR", AS AN INSTRUMENT OF LABOR COLONIZATION

In its endeavor to further the colonization of Palestine directly, the Histadrut created the "Nir," one of the most unique financial institutions ever organized by a labor movement in a country where labor is not yet in control of the whole national economy. The "Nir" is actually a workers' colonization society, whose aim is to assist all types of workers' groups in their settling on land, or in establishing workers' suburbs near the cities. The role of the "Nir" in the most recent colonizing undertakings, begun in spite of the Arab outbreaks, cannot be overestimated.

The principal aim of the "Nir" is to create a public fund which, together with the savings of the workers, however small, can be used as an additional contribution to their colonization. The founders of the "Nir" believed that the readiness of the workers to invest their hard-earned money in a desirable colonizing project would prove to be a strong inducement to richer outsiders to tackle the project as a whole and invest larger sums of money in it.

The necessity for organizing the financial participation of the workers in their own colonization, always considered a desirable goal by the pioneers of Palestine, was recognized immediately after the foundation of the Histadrut.

Confronted with the fact that Zionist funds lagged heavily behind the multiplied needs for new colonization, its leaders, as far back as fifteen years ago, began to look for further means of accelerating the settlement of workers on land. The actual work of the "Nir" is, however, of later origin. It started with the latest period of Palestine's prosperity, when large groups of workers began to use their increased wages to accumulate substantial savings of their own. These savings, while insufficient for complete colonization, could, nevertheless, be used, especially when backed by the collective responsibility of a group, as the initial basis for further grants and credits.

The development of the "Nir" has been greatly accelerated by the recent Jewish immigration from Nazi Germany. Unable to take their money out of Hitler-land through the usual channels of foreign exchange, German emigrants of the capitalistic class are compelled to resort to various costly methods to save at least part of their property, already greatly reduced by the practically forced liquidation of their businesses. In so far as Palestine is concerned, this difficult and not very agreeable task is performed by a special "Transfer Office" which uses the Mark deposits of prospective Jewish immigrants in Berlin to pay for German goods sent to Palestine. According to the rules of the Transfer Office, these prospective immigrants, unless they come to Palestine in person and use their money for constructive undertakings, must invest it in Palestinian bonds used to finance land purchases and other economic activities, important for the upbuilding of the country. The "Nir" has thus been enabled to sell a substantial amount of long-term bonds secured by its common shares and the collective liability of its members.

By the end of 1936 the paid-in capital of the "Nir," contributed by many thousands of workers who usually possess from one to five one-pound shares, reached a total of \$885,000. In addition to its own capital, raised by the

issuance of common and preferred shares, the "Nir" was able to realize not less than \$735,000 from bonds sold mostly to German refugees.

In spite of the political instability resulting from the last Arab riots, the "Nir" has suffered no substantial losses on its investments and has been able to pay dividends (five per cent on common shares) even in these trying times. All signs seem, therefore, to indicate the greatest possibilities for its future development.

### "LAND BY SAVINGS"

In addition to creating a general workers' fund for colonization, the "Nir" encourages direct investments by Histadrut members through its "land by savings" department. It aids the formation of groups whose purpose is to acquire land for their future colonization. The money raised by these groups is handed over to the National Fund for the acquisition of land for their respective members.

The land does not become their private property; it remains the property of the National Fund. Later, after the saver has settled on the land, this organization returns him the money contributed for the purchase of the land.

In other words, the participants in the "land-by-savings" scheme are actually lending money to the National Fund for the purpose of buying land for their own colonization. Later this money is refunded to them by the National Fund, and then it can be used again to meet the expenses of actual colonization. Their savings are, naturally, not sufficient to cover all these expenses, and the settlers must therefore rely to a large extent on credit and outright contributions from Zionist funds.

In spite of its recent origin—the actual work of the "Nir" did not begin before 1933,—the "Nir" has already been instrumental in settling several groups on the land of "Vadi Havarat," (now usually designated by its Hebrew

name, "Vadi Hofer") and in starting the very important colonization of the fertile valley of "Bet Shaan." It was also a contributing factor in the acquisition of the Huleh Concession and will certainly take a still greater part in the settlement of that promising region, now covered by malaria-breeding swamps.

Recently "Nir" has extended the original field of its activities by undertaking the financing of water cooperatives, particularly if they are providing collective farms and workers' settlements with irrigation facilities. It also participates in home-building projects in the large citrus growing colonies of Judea and Sharon, and even in the cities.

The first irrigation cooperative founded with the assistance of the "Nir" is now being established in the western part of Emek Izrael, the development of which has until now been greatly hampered by the lack of water. By digging deeper and more modern wells, and by equalizing the water supply over a broader area, this irrigation cooperative will make possible the more intensive colonization of that region, which is the natural source of supply of agricultural products for the adjoining Haifa. The water cooperative of the Emek, established jointly with the Keren Hayesod and the irrigation department of the Jewish Agency, is looked upon as the first step in this very important sphere of "Nir's" future activity. It will have a capital of \$500,000, of which 40% will be realized from shares taken by the "Nir" and other national institutions and 60% from bonds. In 1936 "Nir" made final arrangements for the building of 650 workers' homes in several colonies. Of these houses, 259 are being erected in Hedera, 150 in Kfar Saba, 80 in Herzliah. All these houses are being built as separate workers' sections, and every one of them will have a plot big enough—one and a half dunams—(100 ft. by 150 ft.)—to enable its owner to cultivate a large garden, to plant a few fruit trees, to keep some

poultry, and a cow, thus saving a substantial part of his living expenses. The "Nir" invests in every one of these workers' homes the sum of \$750 which is 70% of the total credit given to the prospective home owners. The houses are being built on the land of the National Fund in order to avoid their future misuse for speculative gain. Some of these houses are already in construction, and the others will be started before the end of 1937.

In general the "Nir" expects to be able to build from 400 to 500 workers' homes in the colonies every year, thus solving one of the most puzzling problems of Palestine's upbuilding, the problem of permanent Jewish labor on private farms.

The investment of the "Nir" in workers' suburbs near the cities amounted in 1936 to the initial sum of \$250,000. The activities of the "Nir" in this field are being conducted in close cooperation with another important institution of the Histadrut—the Central Office for Urban Workers' Settlements.

### HOME BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Assisted by the strong urge of Palestine's Jewish workers to have homes of their own, however small and modest, and however great the sacrifice necessary to obtain them, the Central Office of Urban Workers' Settlements established by the Histadrut in 1929, has done truly remarkable work. Cooperating closely with local home-building associations, it succeeded in erecting 3,200 dwellings for their members, and in addition, secured sufficient building plots for the housing of another 9,000 workers' families.

In this activity, Haifa has taken the lead. There the "Central Bureau" was instrumental in building "Kiriath Haim" with its thousand workers' dwellings, and in laying the foundations of other workers' suburbs on the slopes of the Carmel and in the adjoining Valley to the north.

Tel-Aviv, which, until 1936, was second in the home-building activities of the Histadrut, has lately surged to the fore by the erection of the great workers' community, "Kiriath Avodah" (Town of Labor) to the south of Jaffa, adjoining the old agricultural school of Mikveh Israel. Jerusalem, with 400 workers' homes built in the last five years, lags behind the accomplishments of the more progressive maritime cities.

Up to 1936, most of the dwellings erected with the assistance of the "Central Bureau" were detached, one-family houses, surrounded by small plots. Only a minority of the home-builders preferred to unite their residences into large cooperative apartment buildings. Lately, however, the leaders of the Histadrut have come to urge this latter type of housing because it seems to offer a stronger guarantee against speculative leanings which cannot be totally eradicated by the mere fact that the land on which the house is built belongs to the National Fund. Experience has shown that even in such a case the owner of a house may erect a second floor over his own quarters and rent it at the rates prevailing in the neighborhood, where houses are being built on the usual capitalistic basis. He may also use the remaining part of his lot, which is held on a practically perpetual lease from the National Fund, for building additional living quarters for renting purposes. Although the ownership of the land by the National Fund is a sufficient guarantee against capitalistic degeneration in *rural areas*, it is not enough to prevent building speculation in congested cities.

With this consideration in mind, the leaders of the home-building associations of the Histadrut are inclined to erect the future workers' homes in the form of large cooperative buildings surrounded by common grounds, and, eventually, by a cooperatively operated vegetable garden. As in most other spheres of its activities, even here the Histadrut does not apply strict and rigid rules. It does not forbid

the construction of detached homes when local circumstances seem to favor this type of building, or where the members of a home-building association are strongly opposed to cooperative apartments. It uses its moral influence, however, to win the home builders to its point of view.

## WOMEN IN THE HISTADRUT

Considering itself the nucleus of a future Jewish labor commonwealth, the Histadrut is naturally anxious to inculcate its ideology into every workers' family of Palestine. It understands clearly that every socialistic movement is basically weak as long as it is represented mainly by men and is not wholeheartedly supported by the women. Where the mothers are indifferent, the growing generation is not educated in the proper spirit. Palestine has not forgotten the example of the first Bilu pioneers who, from idealistic beginnings, gradually drifted into a life of exploiting planters, chiefly because of their wives' unwillingness to exchange the trappings and trivialities of city life for healthy work on the farm. Corrupted by their unhealthy environment, the children of the first pioneers naturally drifted away from the colonies and even from Palestine as a whole.

With its eyes on the future, and heedful of previous warnings, the Histadrut attributes great importance to the organization and education of the wives and growing children of its members. That is why the Council of Women Workers and Juvenile Workers' Organization, both parts of the Histadrut, command the greatest attention and receive the most generous support of its leaders. Both organizations are based on democratic principles and enjoy a great deal of autonomy. All women belonging to the Histadrut and all young workers participating in its youth organization are given an opportunity every year to elect freely their representatives to a special convention



at which a Central Committee representing their respective branches of the Histadrut is selected.

The number of women in the Histadrut is exceptionally large. This is due to its organizational principles, which accept the wife of a worker as a full-fledged member of the Histadrut with equal voting power, even when she has no outside occupation of her own. This principle, which is inconceivable in a trade union, has its foundation in the general conception of the Histadrut, already explained in previous chapters. The Histadrut considers itself not merely a labor organization, but the foundation and prototype of a future labor commonwealth. It tries, therefore, to apply at the present time the principles on which that labor commonwealth will be built in the future. The wife of a member of the Histadrut may, of course, choose not to belong to the organization; she may even oppose it on ideological grounds. Her adherence is, however, strongly encouraged by reduced dues and by the acceptance of her domestic work as sufficient qualification for membership.

Of the total membership of the Histadrut, which, in 1937, exceeded the 100,000 mark, 35,000 are women. Their autonomous organization, The Council of Women Workers, does not limit itself to cultural or social propaganda among the women of Palestine. In line with the general purpose of the Histadrut, it performs specific economic tasks which are of great importance in the upbuilding of the country. The most significant of these tasks is the training of immigrant girls in agriculture and trades. Palestine is a pioneer country; it needs, therefore, the active participation of women in all kinds of urban and rural work. Besides, the Histadrut, with its socialistic conception of life and its glorification of labor, is not reconciled to the idea of confining women to the kitchen and the nursery. It prefers to have them participate equally with men in all fields of economic endeavor and to relieve them as much as possible of the drudgery of housework.

In accordance with this point of view, the Council of Women Workers pursues three objectives:

1. Training immigrant girls in agriculture and trades and helping them obtain suitable occupations in their respective spheres.
2. Establishing institutions which would, as much as possible, relieve the woman working outside her home from the additional burden of her household.
3. Raising the earnings, the standard of living, and the culture of the working women of Palestine.

The first of these objectives is attained through the establishment of school farms for girls. These farms, twelve in number, at the end of 1936, with working facilities for 400 girls, have already trained a large number of immigrant girls in agricultural work, thus turning them into very useful members of the Kvutzot and workers' settlements. The capital invested in these farms, exclusive of the land allotted to them by the National Fund, is approximately \$400,000.

Most of this sum was contributed by three organizations which are anxious to enlarge the part of the woman in the upbuilding of Palestine; The Jewish Agency, the "WIZO" (Women's International Zionist Organization), and the "PWO" (Pioneer Women's Organization of America). Though their aim is mainly educational, these girls' farms are actually self-supporting. They cover their current expenses by revenues derived from their tree-nurseries, flower cultivation, vegetable gardens, poultry, and dairy. Due to this self-sufficiency, outside contributions can be used for improving and enlarging the existing girls' farms and building additional ones.

The activities of the Women's Council of the Histadrut in the cities and in the larger private colonies consist mainly in the founding of cooperatives to provide work for unemployed women, in organizing evening classes to

train them in trades, and in maintaining kindergartens and day nurseries for the children of working women. A number of cooperative restaurants, laundries, and dress shops have also been established with the assistance of the Women's Council and are under its control. It is interesting to note that the day-nurseries and kindergartens of the Histadrut derive 70 per cent of their income from the contributions of the parents, and only 30 per cent from collections and public funds.

In addition to these institutions, whose common aim is to multiply the working opportunities for women in agriculture as well as in industry, the Women's Council devotes much of its energy to cultural and educational activities among the women of the country. This cultural work has proved to be very helpful in the shaping of a new type of woman, who, imbued with the national and social ideal of Palestine's working class, wholeheartedly shares the work, the privations, and the dangers which are the lot of its heroic pioneers.

### WORKING YOUTH

No less important are the activities of the Working Youth Organization, which numbers approximately 6,000 members, most of whom are between the ages of 15 and 20.

The Working Youth Organization has a twofold purpose. First, it endeavors to introduce the youth of Palestine to all kinds of constructive occupations, thus preparing them to become useful builders of the future national home. Second, it strives to imbue the growing generation with the idealistic spirit of their fathers, to plant in their young souls a love for work, devotion to Palestine, and the firm belief that socialism is the final solution of the woes of humanity.

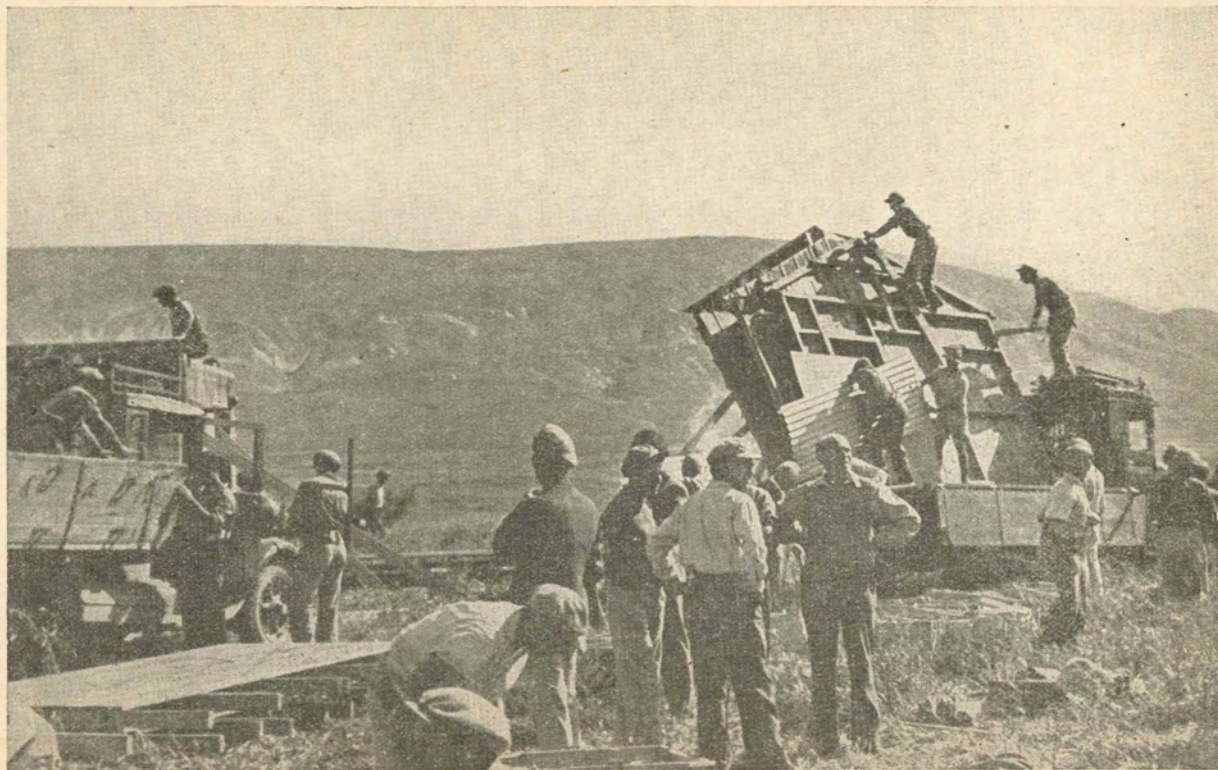
The practical work of the Youth Organization consists in the introduction of adolescent youth to rural and urban

work and in their protection from undue exploitation. One of the most daring experiments undertaken by the organization in its endeavor to adapt Palestine's young generation to agricultural work is the large "Youth Kibutz" in Naaneh, near Rehobot. Here all labor is performed by adolescents, only a small number of adults working as mechanics or instructors. The Naaneh camp was originally established with the assistance of a group of American citrus planters who undertook to supply its youthful members with a certain minimum of paid work. At present, the "Youth Kibutz" in Naaneh bears a striking resemblance to some of the larger local "Kibutzim," which, while relying on wages from outside work as the main source of their income, strive at the same time to build up their own collective farm. The farm, established on land allocated to it by the National Fund, helps to reduce the living expenses of the youthful pioneers, thus assuring them a certain minimum of comfort in spite of the low farm wages and the seasonal fluctuations in agricultural work.

Many of the members of the Youth Kibutz were, after a few years of work in Naaneh, admitted into the older Kvutzot, and their admission created an opportunity for training other youthful pioneers in agricultural work. In general, the Naaneh Kibutz has proved to be a great success, not only as a permanent economic unit, but also as a practical farm school for the rising generation.

Encouraged by the success of the Naaneh Kibutz, the Youth leaders of the Histadrut are laying the foundations for a few smaller undertakings of this type. They are particularly active in the agricultural training of the German youth, who, owing to the special conditions in the Nazi country, are frequently sent to Palestine at a very tender age and have, therefore, no opportunity to receive any practical Hakhshara in Galuth.

Simultaneously with its efforts to adapt the growing



*Putting up the defence in a  
Kutz that was built in a day*

generation to agricultural work, the Youth Organization is also active in vocational education in the cities. For this purpose the Histadrut maintains evening schools for young workers in the three principal cities of Palestine: Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa.

The school in Tel Aviv, established with the money sent by the Palestine Labor Campaign in America, bears the name of Max Pine, the late organizer of the United Hebrew Trades in New York, who was highly instrumental in directing the attention of the Jewish workers in America to the national and social importance of the constructive work which was going on in Palestine. The Max Pine school is at present a very important institution; in addition to evening courses for working youth, it now includes regular classes, both general and vocational, for the education of adolescents aspiring to a thorough mastery of some urban trade. Because of its exceptional usefulness, it was recently included in the small list of Jewish schools directly subsidized by the Government.

The educational activities of the Youth Organization and its endeavor to arm the young workers with an adequate mastery of their trade, are seriously handicapped by the unfavorable working conditions of apprentices, who, more than any other group, are in need of its assistance. There exists, it is true, a law which by restricting their working hours, protects young workers from undue exploitation. The authorities, however, are not interested in its strict enforcement. Only the tireless efforts of the Youth Organization have prevented it from becoming as much of a dead letter in the Jewish communities of Palestine as it is in the Arab towns and villages.

In general the Histadrut devotes much energy to improving the working conditions of adolescents who were driven to the shops by poverty long before they were able to finish even their elementary education. It also carries on intensive cultural work among them. The youth

weekly "Bamaaleh," one of the best labor publications of Palestine, is of great assistance in this important task.

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

It is only natural that the broad aims of the Histadrut should be reflected in very intensive and many-sided cultural activities. The Histadrut does not restrict its cultural work to the kind of social education usually given by Socialistic labor bodies in other countries to their adult members. Due to its fundamental conception as the prototype of a labor commonwealth in Palestine, the Histadrut necessarily takes a deep interest in the problems of education in general. It considers it a duty to provide the children of its members with a modern and socialistic type of education, and to take care of the growing youth for the purpose of insuring their social development and economic usefulness in the upbuilding of the country.

Based on these broad foundations, the cultural activities of the Histadrut are divided into three main branches:

1. Education of the children.
2. Education and protection of working youth.
3. Raising the cultural standards of the adults.

The Histadrut maintains a far-reaching net of kindergartens and elementary public schools in Kvutzot and Kibutzim in workers' settlements, colonies, and cities. Its Educational Department, which is affiliated with the Executive Committee of the Histadrut in Tel Aviv, supervises educational activities in ninety different localities. In addition to local schools, the Histadrut has erected a number of district schools whose curriculum corresponds in part to that of high schools.

The educational work of the Histadrut began soon after its foundation in the workers' villages whose schools, the only ones in the vicinity, are providing education to all

children of the given settlement. Gradually, however, it extended its net of schools to include other colonies and even cities where the schools of the Histadrut exist side by side with other types of schools—general schools which preach no particular ideology, and Orthodox schools in which the tenets of the Jewish religion are the most important basis of the whole educational system.

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE HISTADRUT

The schools of the Histadrut together with most of the other Jewish schools of Palestine belong to the school system of the "Knesseth Israel," the officially recognized community of Palestinian Jews. They are consequently under the general supervision of the Bureau of Education of the National Council (Vaad Haleumi). This supervision is, however, limited to financial matters and in no way interferes with the ideological basis of the Histadrut's schools. The schools of the Histadrut are therefore able to educate the children of the workers in the spirit of Palestine's labor movement. Their main aim is to bring up these children to be worthy citizens of labor Palestine, and to imbue them with a deep sense of equality and love for social justice. They are not satisfied with filling the heads of the children with a certain minimum of general knowledge. They consider it just as important to instill in them the spirit of useful physical work, mutual help, and readiness for pioneering and to make them deeply aware of the great spiritual values of Palestine's labor movement.

With these aims in view, it is quite natural that physical work should take an important place in the curriculum of the workers' schools of Palestine. There is no workers' school without a garden, cultivated by the pupils themselves. Most of them also possess special work-shops where the children are taught the rudiments of carpentry and other trades. In the Kvutzot, where the children live in separate "Children's Houses" they raise most of the vege-



tables used in their kitchens in their own school gardens. They also take turns in helping the cook, in washing the dishes, and cleaning the dining room after each meal. Even the general cleaning in the Children's Houses is accomplished with the active help of their small inhabitants. In their schools, the Kvutzot have thus realized the ideal of education through work which is the dream of many progressive educators in other countries.

Another important aim of the workers' schools is to educate the children in the spirit of socialistic solidarity and to accustom them to a life of equality and mutual assistance. In accordance with the general ideology of the Histadrut, this socialist education is in harmony with the revival of the national spirit. Jewish holidays, for example, are celebrated with the same devotion as the First of May. They serve as occasions for frequent parades and collective visits to the schools of the neighborhood. In explaining these holidays to their pupils the teacher in the workers' schools emphasize their national origin and social ideals.

## AMONG WORKING YOUTH

Another branch of the cultural activities of the Histadrut is its care for working youth, that is, for children who are not able to finish their regular schooling because of necessity of earning a living. Many of these children are engaged as apprentices in small shops where they are exploited in the traditional manner of the backward countries from which their employers came to Palestine.

The Histadrut is also instrumental in helping an ever-growing number of Palestine's youth to enter the collective farms for agricultural training and for eventual acceptance as members of these collectives. It has organized a special youth-farm and has taken a very active part in the agricultural and social training of the German children lately

sent to Palestine by their parents who have lost all hope for their future in Nazi Germany.

Fifteen years ago the Histadrut opened its first evening schools for working children in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. These schools, continuously growing in size and capacity, are giving many of these boys and girls the elementary education of a public school together with the special training suited to their ages and trades. In these schools originated the "Working Youth Organization" of the Histadrut, an important body fully deserving the special description given it in a previous chapter of this book.

### CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AMONG IMMIGRANTS

The third important branch of the educational activities of the Histadrut is its cultural work among adults. It is conducted particularly among newly arrived immigrants who are not sufficiently familiar with the general conditions of Palestine and the Hebrew language adopted by the Yishuv as its common medium of expression and national integration. This important branch of educational activities is being conducted by the Cultural Department of the Histadrut, in close collaboration with corresponding committees of the local "workers' councils."

As has been said before, the transformation of Hebrew into a language of life and thought, a language which will help the multi-lingual immigrants from all parts of the world gradually to amalgamate into a strong and united cultural body, is considered by the Histadrut to be one of the most important aims of its cultural work. Evening language courses, for beginners as well as for more advanced pupils, are conducted in all towns, colonies, and agricultural settlements. While learning the language, the pupils also become acquainted with Palestine's labor ideas and acquire some knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, of the Jewish Yishuv and its achievements.

The knowledge of the country in general plays an im-

portant part in the cultural activities of the Histadrut. Lectures with slides are frequently given by traveling experts, and collective tours and hikes under the leadership of experienced guides are arranged in different parts of the country. These activities help to acquaint immigrants with their old-new fatherland, and create a deep feeling of attachment to the country destined to become their National Home. There is no settlement in the country, however small or out of the way, where lectures and talks on scientific and social subjects are not periodically arranged. The study of the old Hebrew literature, including the Bible, is pursued together with courses on the modern creations of Jewish men of letters. The great political problems of today are being analyzed before attentive and grateful audiences. Popular science, especially in its application to Palestine's agriculture, is given an important place.

Courses in Arabic—at least the simpler dialect, spoken in Palestine—are likewise being conducted by the Educational Department of the Histadrut. The study of Arabic is considered important for the establishment of better relations with the non-Jewish population of the country. In certain cases, especially when a Jewish settlement is being built in an Arab vicinity, it is truly indispensable.

### THEATRE, MUSIC, PUBLICATIONS

The cultural activities of the Histadrut are extended even to the field of the theatre. Out of amateur presentations by talented workers there has grown up a permanent workers' theatre on a semi-professional basis. This workers' theatre, "Ohel" (Tent) is now generally recognized as one of the foremost theatrical enterprises in Palestine, and its artistic accomplishments compare favorably even with those of the famous Habima. Naturally the "Ohel" displays a pronounced progressive tendency and pays great attention to the portrayal of social and economic problems of the new Jewish life in Palestine.

Recently the Ohel undertook a successful dramatic tour of various countries of Europe; its performances were highly praised by the press and it won many new and enthusiastic friends everywhere.

Some of the larger Kvutzot have recently organized musical bands of their own, and this is certainly helping to enrich life even in remote agricultural settlements. Besides, famous artists visiting Palestine usually consider it their duty to give a few concerts in the larger agricultural settlements, which on these occasions, become Meccas for the surrounding Kvutzot and Moshavim. The deep understanding on the part of hard working manual toilers for the highest achievements of art, and their unusual interest in such performances, have made an indelible impression on the greatest musical geniuses who, though not being socialists, are probably tired in their hearts of catering to the jaded appetites of the overfed bourgeoisie. This is probably the explanation of the fact why such a man as Toscanini, though he has practically retired from active musical work, recently expressed his wish to devote to Palestine a considerable part of each year without any remuneration.

An important role in the cultural life of Palestinian workers is played by the "Davar," the daily newspaper of the Histadrut. Founded eleven years ago, the "Davar" now enjoys a larger circulation than any other newspaper in Palestine, and exercises a very strong influence on public affairs. Printed in Hebrew, it takes its place, by virtue of its contents, in the foremost ranks of the Socialist press throughout the word. In addition to daily news, it devotes much space to literature, popular science and economic problems. It publishes several weekly and monthly supplements: one for children, another, "Dvar Hapoelet" (publication of the Working Women's Council), a third for literary criticism. "The Cooperative Bulletin," which is devoted to economic problems, especially as they affect

the cooperative upbuilding of Palestine. It also issues a special daily page for the new immigrants; printed in larger, easier type and much simpler language, it is intended to help the immigrant, who has not yet sufficiently mastered Hebrew, in his endeavor to become familiar with the daily life of the country. In addition there are a number of weekly and monthly publications issued by the parties affiliated with the Histadrut, and by the most important divisions of its economic activities.

The Agricultural Department of the Histadrut, for instance, publishes the excellent monthly, "Hassadeh" (the Field) which is devoted almost exclusively to popularization of new agricultural matters and to the mutual exchange of farm experiences among the settlers. For Arab workers it publishes a weekly, "Hakikat al Amar."

Because of improved economic conditions, the Histadrut has been able during the last few years to erect a number of buildings of its own to serve as workers' clubs and cultural centers. They contain large halls for meeting, reading and recreation rooms, and smaller classrooms for regular courses. The "Workers' Houses," as they are called, also contain most of the local agencies of the Histadrut: the Employment Bureau, the Workers' Council, the Women's Unit, the Secretariat, etc. Very often they also serve as the site of the cooperative restaurant controlled by the local board of the Histadrut. In many cases the ground floor of the "Workers' House" is designed for a moving picture theatre, which is sometimes rented from the Histadrut by a private entrepreneur. The workers' houses are usually among the largest buildings of the locality. Even in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where there are many architecturally important buildings, the "Workers' Houses," built within the last few years, deserve honorable mention even from the purely architectural point of view.

In the cities, cultural activities are frequently conducted autonomously by trade unions and larger factories. Fre-

quently the workers have an opportunity to hear short lectures in their place of work during the mid-day recess.

Specific educational work in response to specific demands is carried on by the Association of Urban Cooperatives, by the Union of Office Workers, by the "organization of working mothers," etc.

With the active support of the Histadrut, an archive and museum of the Jewish Labor Movement in Palestine and in Galuth was founded in 1932. Its aim is to collect all available material on the Jewish labor movement from its origins to the present. An important collection of books and periodicals, documents, photostats, etc., is already in existence. Under the auspices of the Labor Museum, lectures are being frequently given by old comrades who participated in the beginnings of the Jewish labor movement in Palestine; their stories are immediately recorded in writing and kept as material for future studies. From time to time the museum also publishes important material on the history of the movement.

During the past few years of large scale Jewish immigration, special educational committees have been founded for cultural work among the immigrants from specific countries. Lectures given in Hebrew are translated for those people into the language of the country they came from. Such cultural work among the German Jews and the newcomers from Oriental countries are considered to be of great importance.

### HEALTH WORK

No part of the widely-branching activities of the Histadrut gives rise to as much general recognition and admiration as its health work, which is carried on through the medium of a special organization, the "Kupat Holim" (Sick Fund). From small beginnings the "Kupat Holim" has grown, in sixteen years of its existence, to be the greatest and most important health organization of the country.

Unbelievable as it may seem, in 1936 its budget exceeded that of the Health Department of the Palestine government. By the end of 1936 it embraced 70,000 members, who, with their families, composed no less than 35 per cent of the total Jewish population of Palestine.



*Hitadrut hospital in Haifa*

The fundamental purpose of the "Sick Fund" is to provide its members with adequate medical treatment in cases of illness or disability. Every member of the Kupat Holim, independently of his physical condition, pays his monthly dues, the amount of which depends on his general income. In cases of sickness, treatment is usually free and only a nominal fee is charged for special services, for instance: massages, x-rays, dental plates, etc.

The Kupat Holim maintains one large hospital near Tel Aviv and another at Afuleh in the heart of the valley of Esdraelon. During the winter it also conducts a special

hospital for rheumatic diseases in Tiberias, near the site of the famous mineral springs. Among its other important institutions, are two large convalescent homes, one on the Mount Carmel, and the other in Motzah, in the mountains of Judea. Medical aid for visiting patients is given in three general clinics, with x-ray cabinets, in the cities; five district clinics in rural localities; and 77 dispensaries and first aid stations in the villages—all belonging to the Kupat Holim. Fourteen dental clinics; eight cabinets for electric massages, and 32 infant welfare stations, are also included in the broad scope of its activities.

According to its report for 1935, the Kupat Holim employed at that time 175 physicians—some on a part-time basis—120 nurses, 31 dentists, 35 pharmacists and chemists, plus a lay and technical personnel of 226. Since then there has been a further increase in its activities, and its payroll at present includes no less than 700 names.

When it began its activities, the Kupat Holim was generously supported by the "Hadassah," the Zionist Women's Organization of America, which specializes in health work in Palestine. At present, however, the Kupat Holim stands on its own feet in all respects. Practically all of its budget, amounting to about \$1,000,000 yearly, is met by dues and fees from its members and, in some cases, by contributions of those employers who have obligated themselves to such payments in collective agreements with their workers.

No compulsory health insurance legislation exists in Palestine, and the maintenance of such a remarkable organization as the Kupat Holim on a wholly voluntary basis is proof of the extraordinary organizing abilities of Palestine's labor movement.

Recently the Kupat Holim undertook to provide help or easier re-employment for invalid workers who are incapacitated by disease, general weakness or disabilities. As a first effort in this direction, it has opened a cooperative book-bindery for semi-invalids who, true to the ideological



traditions of Palestine's labor movement, are loath to become inactive pensioners. Should this initial step prove successful, similar undertakings in other fields will follow.

### UNEMPLOYMENT FUND

Another unusual institution of the Histadrut is the Unemployment Fund, created as a general reserve for periods of depression. Contributed by the members of the Histadrut during the boom years of 1934-35, it had reached \$500,000 in cash at the time of the outbreak of the last Arab riots—an imposing sum for such a comparatively small community. During the temporary economic difficulties created by the most recent events, this fund, in conjunction with other public funds, was successful in promoting useful public works of a much greater value than its own means would permit. For instance, colonies in need of better highways whose construction had previously been delayed because of the high costs, showed readiness to start work on them when the Unemployment Fund offered a contribution of from 10 to 15% of their total expenses. With such assistance, even when it is given as a loan, leaders of the colony could more easily induce individual land-holders to begin paying their assessments for the building of the road. On the other hand, they were then able to present a stronger case in their negotiations with the government, which is expected to contribute a part of the cost of commonly useful improvements. In this way the Histadrut has been able to start essential public works in years of adversity with a comparatively modest contribution of its own.

The strong efforts of the Histadrut to provide work for its members through its own resources or with the help of Jewish public funds, without waiting for the assistance of the Government, is easily explained by its active policy in the matter of Jewish immigration. The Histadrut is firmly convinced that no lasting prosperity is possible in

present-day Palestine without a continuous Jewish immigration. It is therefore resolved to maintain this immigration even in years of temporary depression. It knows too well that any important number of Jewish unemployed will be seized upon immediately by the none too friendly government as an excuse for a "temporary" stoppage of immigration or for its drastic restrictions. The struggle against unemployment is under such circumstances not only a social duty, but a national necessity as well.

### SPORT ACTIVITIES

An important part of the structure of the Histadrut is its sports organization, "Hapoel" (The Worker), which supervises the recreational activities of Palestine's working men and women. It conducts all kinds of sport groups and provides them with instructors and play fields. Its football and soccer teams excel in competition with visiting athletes from abroad. In addition to heavy and light athletics, games, water sports, and other activities, the "Hapoel" is also interested in cultural recreation. For instance, nine musical bands, with 259 members, are included within the broad range of its activities.

Particularly important is the role played by the members of "Hapoel" in case of Arab attacks on Jewish settlements. Although the "Hagana"—Self-Defense—is considered a task that stands above parties and even classes, the members of the "Hapoel" with their admirable courage and fine spirit of voluntary discipline, are practically its most important participants. Largely on account of their heroism and self-sacrifice no Jewish colony during the riots of 1936 was penetrated by the hordes of Arab attackers misguided by nationalistic extremists or foreign agents.

### POLITICAL DIVISIONS

The broadness of the Histadrut's aims and activities implies its non-partisan character. Considering itself the

prototype of a future labor commonwealth, the Histadrut must open its doors widely to every Jewish worker regardless of the latter's political philosophy and party affiliation. Being similar to parliaments in democratic countries, the conventions of the Histadrut are composed of fractions grouped according to party lines. Even the Council of the Histadrut which has the supreme authority between the conventions, is chosen according to the principle of proportional representation of the various constituent parties.

The most important of these parties is the "Palestine Workers' Party" ("Mapai"), founded about 10 years ago as a result of a merger of two other labor parties—"Achdut Haavoda" and "Hapoel Hatzair." The Mapai generally adheres to the political doctrines of the moderate Socialists of the Second International. Forming an undisputed majority in the conventions of the Histadrut, the "Mapai" is the controlling force in all its activities.

The left opposition in the Histadrut is represented by the "Hashomer Hatzair," and the "Left Poale Zion." The first is actually not a party, but a closely-knitted body of Halutzim, that requires of its members not only a certain ideological creed, but also a collectivistic mode of living. The ideology of this unique group combines militant Socialism with uncompromising Zionism.

The "Left Poale Zion" represent the strictly Marxian wing of the Histadrut which lays most emphasis on political activities and assumes a somewhat critical attitude toward the efforts of the Histadrut to establish collective settlements in the present economic order of Palestine. The "Left Poale Zion" insist on stronger ties with the Jewish culture in Galuth, as expressed in Yiddish, and it also demands, together with the Hashomer Hatzair, more direct methods in organizing the Arab workers of Palestine.

The doors of the Histadrut are also open to non-Socialist workers as long as these are ready to submit to the elementary rules of class solidarity, such as the support of strikes

called by the authorized bodies of the Histadrut. Naturally, the Histadrut also expects them to cooperate in all its activities which aim at the upbuilding of the National Home.

Thus, the Histadrut now includes a considerable group of General Zionists, who, in their capacity as workers, are affiliated with its institutions and activities. It also maintains excellent relations with the religious workers, organized in "Hapoel Hamizrachi," and it is only a question of time when these religious Halutzim will enter the Histadrut as full-fledged members.

### COMMUNISTS AND REVISIONISTS

The Jewish Communists of Palestine,—there is a very insignificant number of them—do not belong to the Histadrut. There is nothing in the constitution of the Histadrut, however, that would exclude from its membership any labor group, no matter how radical it may be. But the fact that the Communists of Palestine are bitterly opposed to the Jewish National Home, and have gone, in their opposition, even to the extent of inciting Arabs against innocent Jews, and generally justifying the Arab terror, is an insurmountable obstacle to their participation in the General Labor Federation of Palestine.

Another labor group which is outside the Histadrut, and even in sharp opposition to its activities are the workers implicated with the Revisionists. The latter sometimes dubbed "Jewish Fascists," recently organized their own "National Labor Federation," as an antidote to the "Marxist spirit" allegedly dominating the Histadrut. The latter, as may be expected, has offered strong resistance having exposed the anti-labor character of the Revisionists. On the other hand, the Histadrut looks upon every Jewish worker in Palestine, even if he is misled by Revisionism, as a potential comrade and co-worker in the upbuilding of the National Home. In accordance with this conciliatory

spirit, the Histadrut recently concluded an agreement with the Revisionist workers whereby the latter are given a share in the distribution of available work, in proportion to their numbers.

## INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

In spite of its strong preoccupation with activities directed towards the upbuilding of the National Home, the Histadrut has not lost sight of its obligations as a part of the international labor movement. Every important event affecting the world's labor movement, every significant step in the long-drawn-out struggle of Socialism against Fascism is followed by the Histadrut with the greatest concern. Its press, and particularly its excellent daily paper, the "Davar," devotes much space to international events, especially when they have a bearing on the fate of the labor movement, or affect, in any way, its chances of destroying the Fascist menace. The fact that Fascism, in addition to its main struggle against the ideals of the working class, has adopted anti-Semitism as a profitable and active sideline, is only a contributing factor, which helps to intensify this interest.

During the more significant instances of this struggle of Labor against Fascism, Palestine's workers went beyond mere sympathy. Although the earnings of a Palestinian worker still lag behind those of the great democracies of the world—the United States, England, and even France—the financial contribution of Palestine's labor movement toward the heroic struggle of the Austrian workers was proportionately the greatest. It also appears that a considerable number of young Palestinian workers fought in the ranks of the International Brigades of Spain, although, for obvious reasons, no statistics proving this statement are available.

The fighting spirit of Palestine's Labor movement is just as strong and admirable as are its constructive achievements.

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## APPENDIX

### Organization and Functions of the Jewish Labor Movement in Palestine

#### I. HISTADRUT HAOVDIM

(General Federation of Jewish Labor)

The membership of the General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine at the time of its establishment in December 1920, numbered 4,433 men and women. In March, 1937, the Federation showed a membership of 104,122 workers (72,630 men, 31,492 women), 35,413 workers' wives, 59,841 workers' children—a grand total of 199,376, representing 48% of the Jewish population.

The Conference of the General Federation of Jewish Labor is its highest legislative body. The ballots are secret and proportional, and all members of the General Federation enjoy the right to vote. The delegates to the Conference choose from among their numbers a Council, which is convened, between conferences, when necessity demands. The Council, in turn, elects from among its members the Executive Committee, which is the highest body of the Federation.

#### A. Trade Unions

There are three national Trade Unions:

1. *The Agricultural Workers' Union* (Histadrut Haklait) with 31,081 members, of which 11,873 are settlers and 19,208 wage earners. The executive body of this Union is the Agricultural Central Office (Merkaz Haklai).
2. *The Union of Railwaymen, Post and Telegraph Workers*, counting 489 Jewish members. (This Union consists of Jewish and Arab workers).
3. *The Office Workers' Union* (Histadrut Hapkidim), with 5,635 members.

There are, besides, 30 to 40 Trade Unions in the various industries, such as, building, wood, metal, textile, leather, printing, etc. These are only local unions and are controlled by the local Workers' Councils.

*The Council of Working Women* (Moatzat Hapoalot), represents all the women who are organized in the Federation, numbering 31,492 women members. The *Working Mothers* have their own organization (Irgun Imaot Ovdot).

*The Organization of Working Youth*, (Hanoar Haoved) counts 6,000 members (ages, 15 to 20 years).

## B. Cultural Institutions

1. *The Cultural Commission* (Vaadat Hatarbut) has the following functions of adult education:

- (a) Spreading the knowledge of the Hebrew Language.
- (b) Conducting a Central Library and a Central Archive.
- (c) Establishing Reading Rooms and Clubs.
- (d) Publishing books, daily and periodical press, technical studies, etc.
- (e) Organizing courses and lectures in people's institutes for adults.
- (f) Supporting the Max Pine Trade School.
- (g) Promoting Art, Music, Theatre, etc.

2. *The Central Bureau of Education* (Merkaz Lahinukh), supervises the school system which has autonomous status in the educational system of the Vaad Leumi. During the school year 1936-1937, it had 159 schools and kindergartens in 88 settlements and cities, with a total of about 8,000 pupils and 356 teachers.

3. *The Sports Organization* (Hapoel) has 10,000 members.

## C. Social Institutions

1. *Sick Fund* (Kupat Holim) is a free association of members of the Histadrut and of other labor groups who are affiliated with the Histadrut. At the end of 1936, it had 59,211 members and gave medical assistance to 108,225 people. It possesses 3 hospitals and 2 sanitarium, 78 health centers, 14 dental clinics, 4 X-ray stations, 78 apothecary stations, 30 nurseries, etc. Its budget for 1936 was about \$1,000,000.

2. *Fund for the Incapacitated* is obligatory for all members of the Histadrut. In 1935 it supported 52 chronic invalids.

3. *The Unemployment Fund* is obligatory for all members of the Histadrut. In the depression of 1935-1936 an additional levy was raised (12 working days a year from each worker) and its functions were started to alleviate the unemployment situation. In April 1937, it had a capital of \$500,000 and had promoted work to the amount of \$3,790,000 which created 1,000,000 working days.

## D. Other Institutions

1. *Immigration Department* (Merkaz Haaliyah) helps the new immigrants to establish themselves in the country.

2. *The Central Labor Bureau* (Merkaz Haavoda) investigates the market of labor and assists in the promotion of new fields of work.



## II. HEVRAT OVDIM

(General Cooperative Association of Jewish Labor in Palestine)

The Hevrat Ovdim was founded in 1924 as the supreme agency of all the cooperative activities of the Jewish workers. The members of the Histadrut are automatically members of the Hevrat Ovdim. It is a member of the International Trade Union. It functions through subsidiary shareholding associations in the following manner:

- (a) The founders' shares, possessing 41%—51% of the voting power are in the hands of Hevrat Ovdim.
- (b) Membership shares with voting power may be secured by all the workers of the given industry (not only by those working in the given cooperative).
- (c) Preferred shares may be bought by everybody. These shares bear dividends, but no voting power.

The most important subsidiary associations of Hevrat Ovdim, are:

1. *Nir*, Cooperative Agricultural Workers' Society. Its membership is identical with that of the Histadrut Hapoalim Hahaklaim. At the beginning of 1937, it had under its supervision 43 Kvutzot, 36 Moshavim, with a total population of 19,236. The following are its main financial institutions:

- (a) *Nir*—Agricultural Colonization Association is the instrument to finance long term loans to settlers. Its registered capital is \$1,250,000 and the loans granted up to January 1937, amounted to \$2,135,000.
- (b) *Tnuva*, Central Agricultural Marketing Cooperative for the sale of the produce of all labor settlements. Its capital is \$300,000, and its investment amounts to \$515,000. In 1936-1937, its turnover was \$3,000,000.
- (c) *Habokér*, Cooperative to provide milch-cattle to the workers' settlements. In 1935-1936 its turnover amounted to \$200,000

2. *Solel Boneh*, the Central Society for Cooperative Contracting, is instrumental in assisting labor immigrants to learn trades and to ensure fair conditions of work. (A subsidiary of this society is "Even," a stone cutting cooperative, with a capital of \$50,000).

3. *Misradim Kablaniim*—contracting agencies in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, with a combined capital of \$275,000. In 1936-1937 they promoted undertakings to the value of \$3,305,000 and employed 1,200 workers.

4. *Yakhin* undertakes on a contracting basis the cultivation and management of orange plantations. It has a capital of \$82,500. In

1936 it contracted for work to the value of \$560,000 and employed 800 workers.

5. *Merkaz Hakooperatzia*, Central Bureau of Producers' Cooperatives (excluding agricultural) embraces 85 cooperatives with a total of about 3,000 workers in 45 factories, 25 transportation units, and 15 service units. Their combined capital is \$1,750,000. The production and turnover amounted in 1936-1937 to \$6,500,000 and the wages paid for that year, \$2,250,000.

6. *Hamashbir Hamerkazi*, Central Consumers' Cooperative, consists of 183 consumers cooperatives, with a total membership of 5,500 (including Kvutzot). The capital of Hamashbir is \$310,000, its turnover (1936) \$1,680,000. In addition, 46 of its affiliated consumers' cooperatives have a combined capital of \$140,000 and a turnover (1936) of \$1,800,000.

7. *Bank Hapolim*, the Workers' Bank, is the most important credit instrument of the workers. In January 1937, its capital amounted to \$700,000 and its deposits to \$2,235,000. It has given credit to the amount of \$2,650,000.

8. *Kupot Milve Vehisakhon*, the Workers' Loan & Savings Association, has 25 units, with a membership of 23,732. Its capital amounts to \$400,940 and it has issued loans to the amount of \$1,680,000 (January 1937).

9. *Hassneh*, the Workers' Life Insurance Co., Ltd., has issued policies to the value of \$3,865,000 (August 1937).

10. *Merkaz Leshikun*, Central Bureau for Workers' Homes, builds cooperative houses and workers' suburbs. It has already built 3,000 dwellings with a capital of \$6,250,000.

11. *Nakhshon*, Palestine Labor Maritime Co., Ltd., was founded in 1937 with a share capital of \$250,000. It assists in building the Port of Tel Aviv and organizes cooperatives of lightermen, fishermen, etc., invests in cargo boats, fishing boats, etc. The Lightermen's Cooperative, "Ogen," had in 1936 a balance sheet of \$10,205 income and \$9,415 expenditures, showing profit of \$790. The cargo boat "Rahaf" made 26 voyages, up to the middle of 1937.

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In the present booklet, *The Histadrut*, Mr. Revusky gives a comprehensive description of the origin, development and functions of the General Federation of Jewish Labor which plays a leading role in the process of Jewish national rebirth in Palestine.

Mr. Revusky is recognized as an outstanding authority on all matters pertaining to Palestine. He is especially qualified to write on the Histadrut, as he was one of those who participated in the founding of this remarkable organization, which took place in Haifa, in December 1920. The author, thus combines personal first hand information with many years of study. This, coupled with an objective point of view, makes this booklet an authentic and authoritative piece of work.